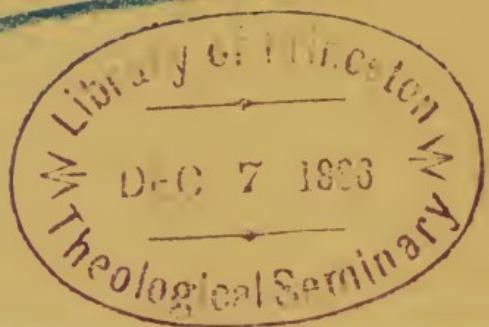
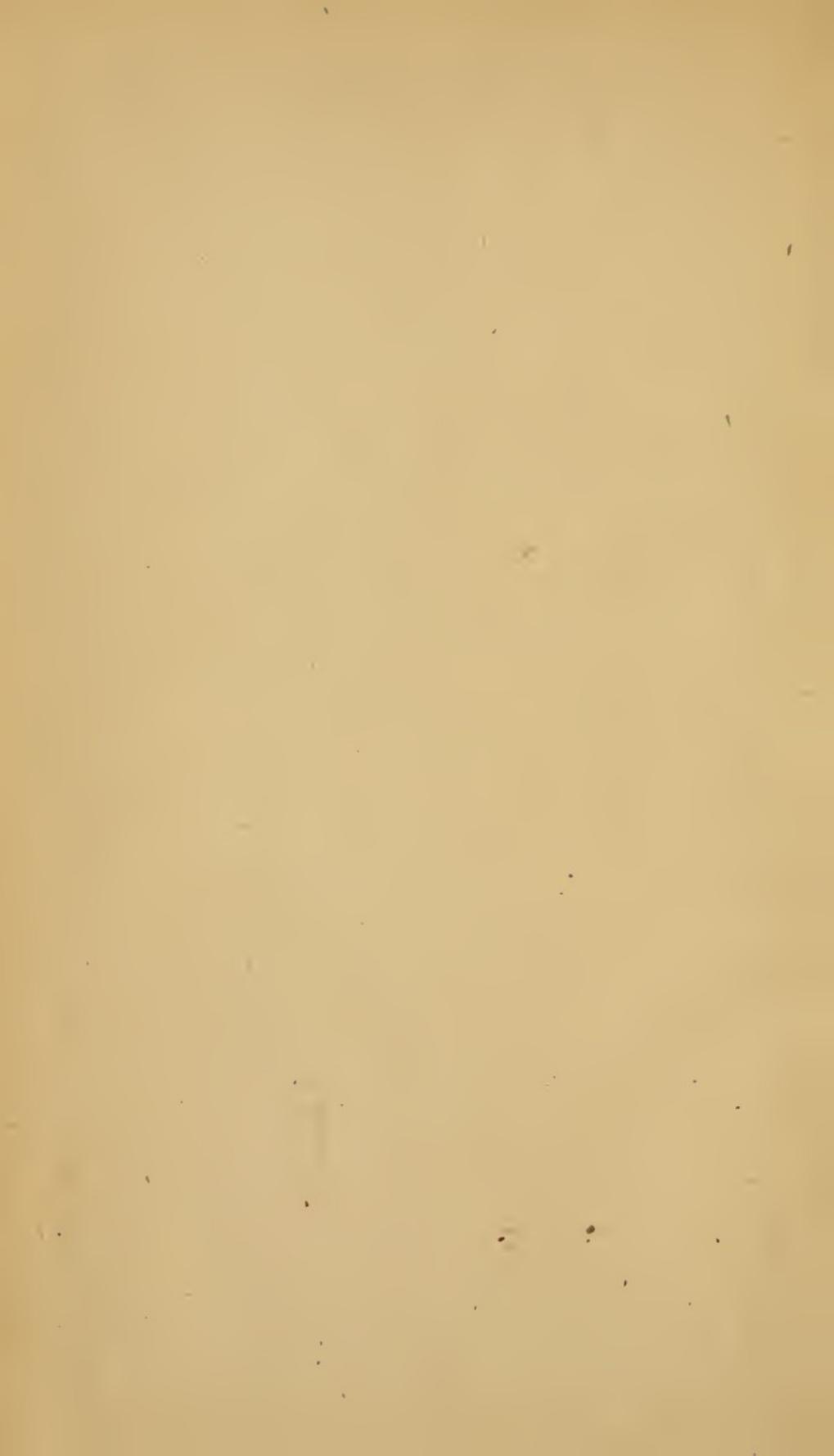


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BV 4930 . P66 1871
Pond, Enoch, 1791-1882
Conversion, its nature and
importance



CONVERSION: ITS NATURE AND IMPORTANCE.

ILLUSTRATED BY EXAMPLES FROM REAL LIFE.

✓
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APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.

BOSTON :
CONGREGATIONAL PUBLISHING SOCIETY,
No. 13 CORNHILL.

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CONVERSION.

SECTION I.

THE NATURE OF CONVERSION.—SEVERAL FORMS OF CONVERSION DESCRIBED.

IT is important to explain the nature of conversion, because this subject is very generally misunderstood, especially by the unconverted. Such persons have no experimental knowledge of conversion, and, in general, no proper conceptions of it. They imagine it to be something which it is not, and are often looking and striving after a change, which, if accomplished, might not be to them of any benefit.

Conversion is not a change in the *nature*, the *substance*, or any of the *faculties*, of the soul. We need no such change as this : we

have no reason to expect any such change ; and such a change, if accomplished, would not be conversion, and might not do us any good.

Nor is conversion a change of any kind, in which the subject of it is entirely *passive*, and for which he can do nothing but wait. Most unconverted persons seem to regard the change in question in this light : they regard it as something in reference to which they have no responsibility, have nothing to do, and for which they can do nothing, but submissively wait until the blessing is bestowed. Now, there can hardly be a greater mistake than this, or one of more disastrous influence. The effect of such an impression can only be, to excuse and quiet the soul in sin, and put off that great and needed change, without which we perish.

Conversion is represented in the Scriptures as a change, in which the subject of it is *active*, and not passive,—a change, which, through the aid and influence of God's Spirit, he is actively to accomplish, and

not one for which he is quietly to wait.
“ Turn ye, turn ye ! for why will ye die ? ”
“ Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin ! ”

This turning, or conversion, is always preceded by more or less of appropriate *reflection*. Persons begin to *think* upon their ways ; and then,—that is, if the work goes on,—they turn their feet unto God’s testimonies ; they begin to *consider* their ways, and turn again unto the Lord. So it was with the prodigal son : he first came to solemn thought,—“ How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough, and I perish with hunger ! I will arise, and go to my father.” Before Ephraim repented, and smote upon his thigh, he was heard bemoaning himself thus : “ Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastened, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.”—Jer. xxxi. 18.

But mere thinking is not conversion ; nor does it always issue in conversion. There must be *the turning of the heart* ; and this

brings us to the very nature of conversion,—
the *first active turning of the soul's affections unto God.*

Holy affections assume different forms, and have different names applied to them, according as they are put forth in view of different objects ; but, of whatever name or form, they all possess the same general *nature* or *character*. Thus, the same kind of affection, which, in view of the divine character, is holy, complacent *love*, will, in view of personal transgression, be *repentance* ; in view of Christ, as a Saviour, will be *faith*, or *trust* ; in view of the divine favors, it will be *gratitude* ; and, in view of the divine government, it will be *submission*. The object of the holy affection may change, and with it the name and form of the affection ; but the nature of it remains the same.

Conversion, as I said, is the first active turning of the soul's affections unto God. It is the commencement of holy affections in the sinner's heart. Up to this time, his heart has been entirely sinful. It has been wholly

under the influence of self and the world : so that holy affections have been entirely excluded ; they have had no place there. But in the moment of conversion, under the influence of appropriate thought and of the Holy Spirit, the first holy exercise or affection is put forth ; and it matters not, so far as the result is concerned, whether this first holy affection be one of love, penitence, submission, or faith. If it be either of them, or if it be any other form of holy affection, the *commencement* of its exercise, the *first* putting it forth, constitutes conversion.

But though it matters not, so far as the great issue is concerned, what form of holy affection is first put forth, yet there will be a difference in the thoughts and feelings of the person converted, according as the first holy affection shall be this or that. He whose first holy affection is love to God will not have the same experience as one whose first holy affection is repentance or faith ; though the conversion, in either case, may be equally satisfactory.

To illustrate this, let us now suppose several cases of conversion, all equally genuine, but differing, circumstantially, according as the first holy affection — which constitutes the conversion — shall be one of love, penitence, submission, or faith.

First, we will suppose a case of conversion where the first holy exercise is one of *love*, — complacent love, delight in the holy character of God, and gratitude for his mercies. In illustration of this, we will suppose an individual, who, during the greater part of his life, has been comparatively thoughtless of God. He has thought of almost every thing else, but has forgotten God; and when, at any time, he has remembered God, he has been troubled, the thought has been painful to him. So far from clinging to God with affection and interest, he shrinks away from him with fear and dislike. He would gladly hide himself from God, as our guilty first parents did among the trees of the garden. He banishes the unwelcome thought as soon as possible. The individual here supposed may not

be an immoral man, he may not be a bad member of society; but the habitual state of his feelings towards God is such as has been described.

But, at length, something occurs in the providence of God,—some striking event, it may be, or the reading of some book, or the hearing of an awakening sermon, or the presentation of some truth or fact,—which excites within him a new train of reflections. He thinks of God as he never thought before. His views of his character are such as he never before experienced. He begins to feel a delight in this character. It is a wonderful character, a glorious character. It comes up with new interest before his mind. He wants to contemplate it all the time. He is astonished that he has never seen it in the same light before. He thinks now of the goodness of God to him, and is melted under a sense of it. He wants words to express his gratitude to that Being who has so long borne with him, and who has been so gracious and merciful towards him.

The individual here spoken of may not know, at the time, what to think of these new impressions and feelings. He may have no thought that they are conversion, or that they indicate conversion. He may have no thought of himself as a converted person ; but he *is* one. If he is not deceived as to the nature of his feelings, he certainly is a converted person. The new exercises above described are not those of nature, but of *grace* ; the springing up of which, for the first time, in the sinner's heart is the moment of his turning,—his conversion,—the interesting moment which he will remember forever as the commencement of his walk with God.

The first holy exercise in the heart of the sinner is sometimes one of *penitence* and *godly sorrow* ; in which case, this constitutes his conversion. The subject of conversion, in this form of it, has passed the whole of his previous life in sin ; not, it may be, in the practice of open immoralities, but in selfishness, in pride, in a love of the world, in thoughtlessness and vanity, in forgetfulness of

God,—in some way, in the love and practice of sin. And yet his sins have given him very little trouble. He has had little thought or anxiety in regard to them. They have not been, perhaps, of the more disgraceful character; at least, they have not been known to be such. He has sinned in good company, and in altogether a respectable way; and he has contrived so to palliate and conceal his sins, that he has had little sorrow or distress on account of them. But, for some reason, his thoughts, of late, have been turned into a different channel. He has been led to review his past life, and see how his account stands with God. He has been led to do it with considerable scrutiny; and he is pained and frightened at the result. He had no idea that his sins were so numerous, or of so aggravated a character. He had no idea that they were characterized by such baseness. They seem to him to be most unreasonable and odious; and he seems to himself to be a vile and odious creature no account of them. When he thinks of the manner in which he

has treated God,— his ingratitude towards him, his forgetfulness of him, his dislike of his character, and transgression of his laws, he feels sorry and aggrieved ; he feels humbled and ashamed ; he cannot bear a view of himself ; he begins to loathe and abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes.

Now, this man, instead of growing better in his own opinion during the change of feeling through which he has passed, has seemed to himself to be constantly growing worse. He had never such a sense of his own vileness as he now has. He has no thought of conversion, at least as having been accomplished in him ; and yet, if his feelings are such as have been described, he is already a converted person. He is a true penitent. He feels as David did when he said, “Behold, I am vile !” He feels as the publican did when he smote upon his breast, and cried, “God be merciful to me, a sinner !” The first holy affection of which he was conscious was one of *penitence* ; and the beginning of these repents in his heart was his conversion.

Conversion is often the commencement of true *submission* to God. The subject of conversion, in this form of it, has always lived under the government of God, and has always been — though perhaps not always sensible of it — unreconciled to that government. He has never been truly willing that God should reign over him, and do with him according to his pleasure. To be sure, when God's plans have been in accordance with his own plans, — when God has pleased him and prospered him, and caused his cup to overflow with blessings, — he has been very happy, and has felt as though he could be quite reconciled to be in the hands of God; but when God has seen fit to pursue a different course with him, crossing his track, blasting his hopes, disappointing his expectations, and defeating his cherished designs, taking from him this comfort, that, and the other, and laying them low, — when God has seen fit to try him in this way, the secrets of his character have come out: he could not repress his murmurs. He said almost unconsciously, “ This is a hard

Master. These are wounds without cause." His opposition, under such circumstances, has risen, it may be, to such a height, that he has become frightened at himself. He had no idea that he had such a rebellious and wicked heart. He is sure, that, with such a heart, he is in no situation to enjoy God, either in this world or the next; and he is led to commune with himself, to contemplate his relations to God, and the claims of God upon him, as he never did before. He considers, first of all perhaps, that, in visiting him with affliction, God has done no more than he had a right to do. He remembers, too, that he *deserves* all these afflictions, and a great deal more; so that the divine dispensations towards him, instead of being unjust, have all of them been mingled with mercy. He further reflects, that these dispensations, of which he had been disposed to complain, were certainly ordered in *wisdom* and *goodness*, and, if suitably improved, would work together for his good. He begins seriously to inquire whether it is not a *privilege* to live under the

government of God ; to be in the hands of One who can make no mistakes, who can indulge no ill-will towards any creature, who can do no wrong thing, and whose wise and good designs no enemy can ever thwart or defeat. He dwells upon the subject in these various lights, till at length his heart begins to yield. He begins to submit to the divine government. He more than submits ; he rejoices in it. He rejoices that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. He feels a pleasure that is new to him in resigning himself and all his concerns into the hands of a holy and sovereign God, to be disposed of as he shall see wisest and best. Now, this man has experienced a great and glorious change of feeling in regard to the divine government ; and this change is *conversion*. It is the same which we must all experience, in one form or another, before we can see the kingdom of God.

I present but another case, and that is, where conversion is the commencement of *faith in Christ*. In illustration of this, we

will suppose an individual who is already deeply convinced of sin. He sees himself to be a guilty and lost sinner, who has no means of hope or help in himself, and can discover no method of deliverance from any other quarter. He knows that a just sentence of condemnation has been passed upon him, and, for aught that appears, he must sink forever under it. He has been in this state of conviction, distress, and almost of despair, it may be, for a long time, looking for light, but behold darkness ; seeking rest, but finding none. At length, some promise is opened, and applied to him ; or some new light is let into the soul, by the help of which he gets a view of the Saviour. He sees him to be almighty and altogether lovely,—just such a Saviour as his perishing case requires. He sees him extend his gracious arms, and hears him cry in accents of love, “ Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden ; and I will give you rest.” And now he yields to the winning invitation. He falls at once into Jesus’ arms. With joy and gratitude, he embraces the provided

Saviour, and commits his sinking soul to him.

I have been the more particular in describing and illustrating conversion under its several forms, in hope that the nature of it may be understood. It will be seen that it is no physical change, no passive transformation, but a change in the character of our internal exercises or affections,—from those which are in some form sinful to those which are in some form holy. And it matters little, as I said, what particular form the change assumes, or how it is first developed, provided it be the change which has been described. The first holy exercise of which the individual is conscious may be one of love, or penitence, or submission, or faith: this is a circumstance of little importance, provided the new exercise be a holy one, and be followed out (as it will be) by newness of life and new obedience.

This new exercise, which is put forth in conversion, and in the putting-forth of which conversion consists, from the nature of the case, is *actively* put forth. It can be put forth

in no other way. It is awakened under the influence of truth, and by the special operations of the Holy Spirit, but in perfect accordance with the free actings of our own minds. Thus, while the glory of the change in question is to be devoutly ascribed to the Spirit of God, the change itself is accomplished *in us*, and in the free and regular exercise of our own faculties and powers. It is *we* that love ; *we* that repent ; *we* that believe, submit, and obey ; *we* that turn from our evil ways, and commence walking in those ways of wisdom which are pleasantness, and those paths which are peace.

Though it is of little importance, so far as the fact of conversion is concerned, what holy exercise is first put forth, still some importance is to be attached to a right understanding of this matter. Every one who has been much acquainted with new converts knows that their feelings vary very considerably at the time of conversion, or shortly after it. To some, the change is sudden and palpable ; to others, the development of it is more gradual.

With some there are feelings of transport, amounting to ecstasy; with others there is less excitement, less intensity of joy, and more that is calm, subdued, and peaceful. Now, one cause of these different developments lies, undoubtedly, in the different forms of conversion, as they have been described. Where the first holy affection is one of repentance, the change will not be followed by immediate light and joy; so far from this, there will be a deep sense of sin, and godly sorrow on account of it. The individual will *sorrow* as he never did before. It may be hours and days before he begins to indulge any hope, or to think of himself as a converted person. Where the first holy affection is one of love or submission, the change will be followed with peace, but not with transport. There will be a calm reposing upon God, and a quiet resignation to his will, but not an ecstasy of rejoicing. But where the first holy affection is one of faith or trust in Christ, the change, ordinarily, is sudden and palpable. It is as a change from the darkness of mid-

night to the light of noon ; from the depths of despair to the rejoicings of hope and heaven. Still the change, in the latter case, is no more real than in either of the former, nor does it promise to be more abiding.

SECTION II.

CONVERSION OF THE APOSTLE PAUL.

WE have thus far illustrated the change in conversion by imaginary cases. In what follows, we propose to illustrate it by cases taken from real life. The examples will be drawn from different sources; but they may all be relied on as having actually occurred. We begin with the conversion of the Apostle Paul.

Of Paul's antecedents previous to his conversion, we need not speak at length. He tells us that he was "a Hebrew of the Hebrews," and was brought up, from his infancy, in the strictest sect of the Jews' religion. He was "a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee." All surrounding influences combined to make him "exceedingly zealous of the law," and "of the traditions of his fathers."

When Saul had completed his education at Tarsus, he was sent by his parents to Jerusalem, that he might be more fully instructed in the law. He attached himself to the school of Gamaliel, at that time the most celebrated teacher in the holy city.

It is hardly likely that Saul was at Jerusalem during our Lord's public ministry, as he never speaks of having seen him in the flesh. He may have been there at the crucifixion, and also at the succeeding Pentecost. He was certainly there soon after the Pentecost, when the dispute with Stephen commenced in the synagogues of the foreign Jews. He probably took part in these disputes, and assisted in bringing Stephen before the Sanhedrim for trial. And, when Stephen was executed, Saul was present, not as a spectator, but as an accomplice in this nefarious transaction. The witnesses who stoned Stephen laid down their clothes at the feet of Saul.

In the persecution which immediately followed, Saul was intensely active. He "made havoc of the Church," binding and delivering

into prison both men and women. He “punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme ; and, being exceedingly mad against them, he persecuted them even unto strange cities.”

When Saul had sufficiently vented his rage at Jerusalem, he went to the high priest, and desired letters to the synagogue at Damascus,* intending, if he found any Christians there, to bring them bound into Jerusalem. But, when he and his company drew near to the city, their progress was suddenly and miraculously interrupted. First of all, there shone around them a great light from heaven, above the brightness of the mid-day sun. Overcome by it, the whole company fell prostrate on the ground together. Next followed a sound like that of thunder, which was heard by all, but which fell, in intelligible accents,

* The high priest at this time claimed the same authority over the Jews in foreign cities, on all questions pertaining to religion, which he exercised at Jerusalem. Pilate also seems to have granted a general license to persecute and destroy the Christians. He had crucified their Master; and he permitted the Jews to treat them as they pleased.

only on the ears of Saul.* He heard what they did not hear, and saw what they did not see. To them the awful sound was without meaning; but he heard the voice of the Son of God. To them it was a glare of light, which suddenly surrounded them; but he saw Jesus whom he was persecuting.

The fact that Saul had here a vision of the Son of God, perhaps like that which appeared to John on the Isle of Patmos,† is to me indubitable. He often refers to it in his subsequent history. “Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? *Have I not seen Jesus Christ the Lord?*” “He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; . . . and, last of all, *he was seen of me also*, as of one born out of due time.” Also, when Barnabas brought Paul to the apostles at Jerusalem, he related to

* This accounts for an apparent discrepancy in Paul's statements of the case. In one place, he says that his companions “*heard a voice, but saw no man.*” In another, he says, that they “*heard not the voice of Him that spake with me.*” Compare Acts ix. 7 with Acts xxii. 9. They heard a sound, but no intelligible words.

† Rev. i. 13-18.

them “ how *he had seen the Lord in the way.*” And so Ananias said to Paul, at their first meeting in Damascus: “ The Lord hath sent me, even Jesus, *who appeared unto thee in the way.*”

The voice which Saul heard, as he lay overwhelmed and prostrate on the earth, was this: “ Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? ” “ And I said, ‘ Who art thou, Lord? ’ and the Lord said, ‘ I am Jesus whom thou persecutest! ’ ” And now, if a thunderbolt had struck the prostrate persecutor, he would not have been more utterly confounded. He saw at once what he had been doing. He saw that this glorified Jesus was really what he claimed to be, the Messiah of the Scriptures, whom he was madly persecuting in his followers. His guilt instantly flashed upon him. He saw his danger and his ruin; and he seems to have submitted at once.

And, if so, this settles the question as to the time of Saul’s conversion. It was not three days afterward, when the scales fell from his eyes; but it was here, on the spot

where he first saw the light, and heard the voice, and met in person his glorified Redeemer. It did not take him long, under the circumstances, to become convicted of sin,—deeply, thoroughly convicted. And being assured of the divine authority, the Messiahship, of Jesus, and of the entire validity of his claims, he seems, as I said, to have submitted himself at once. And so, turning to his heavenly visitant, he said to him, in accents of faith and love, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

This was a very different question from that of the jailer to Paul and Silas: “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” The latter was an inquiry after *light* and *instruction* as to the way of salvation; but the question of Paul carried on the face of it that he was now ready to do any thing: it was as much as to say, “Lord, I am henceforth thy willing servant. Wilt thou own and accept me in this capacity? I am now ready to go anywhere, or do any thing for thee. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

Having thus made his submission to Christ, and given up himself to him to be his servant, he was told to arise from the earth, and go into Damascus, and “it shall be told thee what thou shalt do.” So he arose in his blindness : and they that were with him “led him into Damascus ; and he was three days without sight, neither did eat nor drink.”

His feelings, his reflections, during these three days, Paul has nowhere described : perhaps he could not describe them. Neither Jew nor Christian could sympathize with him. He prayed and fasted in darkness and alone. The recollection of scenes but recently past, the thought of his own cruelty and violence, the last looks of Stephen, and of others who had suffered by his hands, and, more than all, his base treatment of One whom he now acknowledged to be his Lord and Master,— all these considerations crowded into his mind, and made these three days equal to as many years of ordinary penitence and holy sorrow.

But, while he thus waited upon God, anoth-

er vision was granted unto him. He seemed to see a holy man coming in to him, and laying his hands upon him, that he might receive his sight. At the same time, this holy man — Ananias by name — was directed in a vision to go out “into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus ; for, behold, he prayeth !” Ananias at first excused himself, on account of the known character of Saul, and his bloody intent in coming to the city ; but the Lord said, “ Go out and find him ; for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.” So Ananias went, entered into the house of Judas, and found Saul ; and, putting his hands upon him, he said, “ Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales,” — fibrous incrustations, occasioned by the intense light which he had

seen in the way. “ And he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.”

Paul thus became a member of the Christian Church, and entered at once upon the great work of his life,—that of preaching Christ to his dying fellow-men. He went first into the synagogues of Damascus, and “ confounded the Jews that dwelt there, proving that Jesus is the very Christ.” And, when they would not receive his testimony, but sought to kill him, he retired into Northern Arabia, where he spent two or three years. — Gal. i. 17.

How Paul passed his time during this season of retirement, we do not know. Doubtless much of it was spent in meditation and devotion, in communion with Christ, and receiving revelations from him. It was during this period that he “ was caught up into the third heavens,” — into “ the paradise of God,” and heard those unspeakable words, “ which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” It was during this period that he was supernaturally instructed in regard to the truths and facts

of the gospel, which he expressly tells us he did not receive from man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

As we here speak only of the *conversion* of Paul, it is not necessary to follow him in his future course of toil and peril in the service of his divine Master: suffice it to say, that he never faltered in his course, but persisted in it, through every form of opposition and persecution, until he obtained his crown; thus proving that his conversion was a reality, and that his religion could endure the severest tests. At the close of a long life, and in the near prospect of a violent death, he was enabled to say, “I am now ready to be offered; and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.”

In thinking of the conversion of Paul, it is important that we separate it, so far as possible, from the circumstances connected with

it. These were marvellous, some of them miraculous,—as the light, the voice, the vision of Christ; but the conversion itself was not miraculous, nor did it differ essentially from any other case of true conversion. Peculiar circumstances were needed to arrest Paul in his career of blood, to show him his errors, to subdue his prejudices, to convict him of his guilt and ruin, to lead him to submit to his Lord and Saviour, and, from being an enraged persecutor, to become his willing and devoted servant,—peculiar circumstances, I say, were *needed* for these purposes: and they were furnished; and, under God, they were effectual. But the conversion of Paul did not consist in any of these attendant circumstances, but in *the submission of his soul to Christ*,—a submission brought about under the influence of motives, and the accompanying influences of the Holy Spirit; a submission in which he was free and active, and which he may be said, under God, to have accomplished himself. It was *he* that submitted. It was *he* that, from being a bit-

ter enemy of Christ, became his devoted servant and friend. But for this voluntary submission to Christ, the light, the voices, the visions, the miracles, would have done him no good. He would have risen from them all as bitter an enemy as he was before. The conversion of Paul, then, consisted in *the voluntary submission of his whole being to Christ*, and did not differ essentially, as I said, from any other case of genuine conversion.

God uses various methods now to bring impenitent souls to the feet of the Saviour. The most common means, perhaps, is *the preaching of the gospel*; but then God is not confined to this,—at least in the ordinary method of its administration. He often uses other means, as worldly disappointments, the example and conversation of Christians, a fit of sickness, or the death of friends. I once knew a man who was awakened by the singing of a robin, and was afterwards converted, and brought to Christ. The man to whom I refer was a physician and an infidel. Returning home one morning, from his visits to the

sick, he rode under a great spreading tree, in the top of which sat a little robin, pouring forth its morning song. The thought struck him that this little bird was singing a song of praise to its great Creator and Preserver,—a thing which he had never done. This thought was an arrow in his conscience which could not be extracted. It distressed him, until, as I said, he was thoroughly convinced of sin, and brought to submit to Christ. But, then, his conversion did not consist in the singing of the bird, or in any of his subsequent anxieties and distresses, but, as in the case of Paul, in his submission to the Saviour.

And so it is, substantially, in every other case. Conversions do not all assume the same form, nor are they brought about by the same means ; but they are all alike in this : they consist in the turning of the heart, in some form, from sin to holiness,—in a turning from the love of self and the world and the service of Satan to love and serve the living God.

SECTION III.

CONVERSION OF AUGUSTINE, BISHOP OF HIPPO.

FROM the latter part of the third century after Christ to the former part of the fifth, there was a gradual but manifest decay of vital godliness. And although, during this period, God had tried his Church both by judgments and mercies,—first in the terrible fires of the Diocletian persecution, and secondly by the happy revolution under Constantine,—still, the growing evil had not been effectually cured, or scarcely arrested. The declension continued and increased; dead forms and unprofitable disputes were substituted for piety and godliness; and it became painfully evident, that true, spiritual religion must ere long disappear, unless God should interpose by his Spirit, and revive his work. But, at this critical juncture, God did gra-

ciously interpose. His work was revived ; and spiritual religion again flourished,—at least, in one part of the Roman Empire. The principal instrument in this precious awakening, the results of which continue even to our own times, was the celebrated Augustine of Hippo, of whose conversion I am now to speak.

This great man was born at Tagaste, a city of Numidia, in Northern Africa, A.D. 354. His father, Patricius, though nominally a catechumen, was no better than a heathen, until near the close of life. His mother, Monica, was an eminently devoted Christian, who exerted a strong and saving influence over both her husband and her son. Patricius died in hope, at the age of forty, and left Augustine to the care of his mother ; and most watchfully and faithfully did she care for him. Wherever he went, whether as a scholar or teacher, she was sure to be near him : he was the object of much entreaty, and of many prayers ; and, after a sore trial of some sixteen years from the death of his father, the blessing came. When she saw her son a decided

Christian, she felt that the main object of her life was gained. She was now ready to depart ; and, in a few weeks, she was summoned home. In all Christian antiquity, we have not a more eminent instance than is here presented of conjugal and maternal faithfulness. The great Augustine is to be classed with the large number of eminent Christians who have owed, not their usefulness only, but their salvation, to the influence of a pious mother.

Augustine's advantages of education were good, and his talents of the highest order ; but his early life was one of continued debauchery and wickedness. In philosophy, he was a Manichee, and by profession a teacher of rhetoric and oratory. In the exercise of his profession,—after spending several years at Carthage,—he came to Rome. Here he was attacked with fever, and brought near to death ; but he recovered from it, through the influence chiefly, as he afterwards thought, of his mother's prayers. From Rome, he went to Milan, which was at

that time the residence of the emperor. He here became acquainted with Ambrose, Bishop of Milan,—one of the most eloquent preachers of the age. “I conceived an affection for him,” says Augustine, “not as a teacher of the truth, but as a kind and agreeable friend. I studiously attended his lectures, but only to criticise his rhetoric, and see whether fame had done justice to him as an orator. I concerned not myself about his sentiments, but only with his manner and language.

“ Still, the ideas which I strove to neglect forced themselves upon my mind; and I was gradually brought to listen to the bishop’s doctrine. I found reason to rebuke myself for the hasty conclusions I had formed as to the indefensible claims of the Old Testament. Many of the difficulties which the Manichees had started in respect to it found an easy solution in the expositions of Ambrose. The possibility of finding truth in the Church of Christ, of which I had years before despaired, was forced upon me; and I

began to consider by what arguments I might convict Manicheism of falsehood."

It should have been enough to convict a thoughtful man like Augustine of the falsehood of Manicheism, that it exerted no favorable influence upon the character. He was himself living in some of the grossest sins, and yet fancied himself, as to his *higher nature*, perfectly pure, charging the entire blame of the evils he perpetrated upon a fleshly nature which sinned in him.

The difficulties which rose at this time in the mind of Augustine, and stood in the way of his conversion, were partly speculative, and partly practical. The errors of the Manichean philosophy had become so ingrained, incorporated, in his whole interior being, that he found it difficult to eradicate them. When banished, as he hoped forever, they would return, to try and torture him anew. They rose up within him like towers and bastions, to resist the entrance of gospel truth.

But his most desperate struggle was not

with these, but with his debased feelings, and his corrupt practices and habits. His convictions of sin were deep and painful,—I had almost said terrible. He has detailed them at length in his “Confessions,”—a work well worthy the study of the child of God in every age.

At length there remained but a single obstacle in the way of his entering the kingdom of Christ, and that was his long-indulged and easily-besetting sin of unchastity. The way in which he grappled with this, and overcame it, and thus entered the kingdom as it were by violence, must be given in his own words.

“In the agitation of my spirit, I retired into the garden, knowing how evil I was, but ignorant of the good which God had in store for me. With vehement indignation, I rebuked my sinful spirit, because it would not give up itself to God. I found that I wanted a will. Still I was restrained; and the Spirit was urgent upon me with severe mercy. My old mistresses shook my vesture

of flesh, and whispered, ‘Are we, then, to part,—to part forever? And canst thou live without us?’ On the other hand appeared the chaste dignity of continence, ‘Canst thou not,’ said she, ‘perform what many of both sexes have performed, not in themselves indeed, but in the strength of the Lord? Cast thyself upon him: fear not; he will not suffer thee to fall.’ Such was my internal controversy. When deep meditation had collected all my misery into the view of my heart, a violent storm arose, producing a great shower of tears. To give it vent, I rose up hastily from my friend, Alypius, who was sitting by me. The sound of my voice was stifled with weeping; and he remained motionless in the same place. I prostrated myself under a fig-tree, and, with flowing tears, I thus spake: ‘How long, Lord, wilt thou be angry? Forever? Remember not my old iniquities. How long shall I persist in saying to-morrow? Why should not this hour put an end to my slavery?’ As I thus spake and wept, in the bitterness of my

soul, I seemed to hear a voice saying unto me, ‘*Take up and read; take up and read.*’ I took up the Epistle of Paul, which I had by me, and read the following passage, which first struck my eye: ‘Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in clambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.’ I had no occasion to read further. Immediately the struggle was ended, and my fears were gone. I closed the book, and, with a tranquil countenance, gave it to my friend. With a serenity and composure suitable to his character, he went with me to my mother; who now triumphed in the abundant answers to her prayers. Thus thou didst turn her mourning into joy.”

Such was the conversion of Augustine of Hippo,—a renouncing of sin; a turning from it, as a loathed and accursed thing; and coming at once into the peace and hope of the gospel. After his conversion, Augustine closed his school as soon as practicable, be-

came a catechumen, and retired into the country, enjoying, with Alypius, the sedulous and affectionate care of his mother. He was baptized by Ambrose, in the year 387, in the thirty-third year of his age.

Shortly after this, Augustine and his mother went to Rome, intending to return into their own country. While waiting for a vessel to take them to Africa, this best of mothers fell sick and died. She had lived to see the desire of her heart accomplished in the conversion and baptism of her son. She was now ready to depart; and the summons came. She was buried at Ostia, the port of Rome, where a small chapel still marks the place of her sepulture.

Augustine was thirty-three years of age at the time of his conversion. Subsequent to this, he lived more than forty years, and was, under Christ, the great luminary of the Church. He wrote upon most of the great doctrines of the gospel. He treated the subject of religion *practically*, solving difficult questions, cases of conscience, and guiding

inquirers in the way to heaven. He also engaged in most of the controversies of the times, defending the truth as it is in Jesus against those who perverted and opposed it. His controversy with Pelagius was no other than a struggle for evangelical religion against one who was laboring for its overthrow.

It is sometimes said that Augustine was led to adopt his peculiar opinions on the subjects of depravity, predestination, and grace in consequence of his controversy with Pelagius ; but the truth is, he was led into the controversy with Pelagius in consequence of his holding and revering these sentiments. He learned them in the Bible, and in his own conscious experience. He was taught them by the Holy Ghost ; and it may be clearly shown that he came to the knowledge and profession of them at least ten years previous to the Pelagian controversy.

Augustine lived to see Northern Africa overcome, and his beloved Hippo besieged by the ruthless vandals. In the prospect of approaching trials and sufferings, it was his

daily prayer, either that God would deliver the city, or that he would give his servants grace to endure all that might be inflicted, or that he might himself be taken out of the world. In the last particular, and we hope in the two last, his prayer was heard. In the third month of the siege, which lasted fourteen months in all, Augustine was seized with a fever, which terminated his life. He died, A.D. 429, in the seventy-sixth year of his age, and the fortieth of his ministry.

Between Augustine and the apostle Paul, there were some strong points of resemblance. Both had been virulent enemies of the gospel in their younger days. Both had been arrested by omnipotent grace, had been deeply convinced of sin, and had been thoroughly renewed and changed; and, after conversion, both became the heralds and champions of the same system of doctrines,—the doctrines of grace. It was Paul's vocation to combat the errors of his times, and lay down a platform of evangelical doctrine which can never be destroyed. And in a

time of general declension, when these doctrines had been obscured, and dead formalism was rising up to take their place, it was Augustine's vocation to combat the errors of *his* times, and bring back the doctrines of the great apostle to something like their original place and purity. It was his vocation to inculcate and diffuse these doctrinés, and so to sound the gospel trump that its echo has reverberated through all the intervening ages to the present time.

We would not be understood as indorsing every expression or every sentiment which occurs in the voluminous works of Augustine: far from it; but we have no hesitation in saying, that probably no one has lived, since the days of Paul, the influence of whose writings upon the religious world has been so great, so enduring, and, on the whole, so happy, as those of the renowned Bishop of Hippo.

SECTION IV.

CONVERSION OF LUTHER.

IN speaking of the conversion of Luther, it will not be necessary to go into all the particulars of his early life. He was the son of a poor miner, and was born at Eisleben, in Saxony, Nov. 10, 1483. His early education was chiefly accomplished at a school in Eisenach, where he remained several years. He was at this time very poor, and, like several others, was under the necessity of begging his bread. One day, when he had been repulsed from several houses, and was about to return fasting to his lodgings, a lady by the name of Cotta opened her door to him, and invited him to come and live at her house. In after life, Luther used to speak of this woman as “the Christian Shunamite;” and it was with reference to her that

he said, "There is nothing sweeter than the heart of a pious woman."

Luther remained in the family of Cotta two or three years; and they were among the happiest years of his life. At the age of eighteen, he entered the University of Erfurth, where he gave some attention to the scholastic philosophy, but applied himself chiefly to the study of the Latin classics. He was at this period a thoughtful young man, and continually invoked the divine blessing upon his studies. It had become a proverb with him, when not more than eighteen years old: "*Bene precasse est bene studuisse,*" — "To pray well is the better half of study."

When Luther had been two years at the university, as he was one day in the library turning over books, and reading the title-pages, he accidentally came upon a Latin Bible. It was a rare book. He had never seen one before in his life. He was astonished to find that the Bible contained so many more books and chapters than he had

before heard of. With feelings unutterable, he turned over its pages, and exclaimed, "Oh, that I might have such a book for my own!"

After taking his academical degrees, Luther yielded to the wishes of his father, and entered upon the study of law; but God had a different purpose respecting him, and this purpose he began early to manifest. The conscience of Luther was not at ease: he knew that religion was the one thing needful, and that his first care should be for the salvation of his soul; and he was led to resolve that he would do all in his power to secure a well-grounded hope of heaven. The *providences* of God occurring around him went to confirm him in this resolution. He was deeply affected by the sudden death of one of his college friends, but more so by a terrible storm of thunder, which had well nigh proved fatal to himself. As the winds roared, and the lightnings flashed, and the bolt of heaven struck close by his side, he fell on his knees, thinking that his last hour

had come. And here he made a solemn vow, that, if God would appear for his deliverance, he would renounce the world, and devote himself entirely to his service. God did appear for his deliverance; and Luther, in his ignorance, knew no way in which his vow could be performed, and that holiness which he sought could be secured, but by entering a cloister. He must literally forsake the world, and bury himself in the seclusion of some one of the monastic orders.

The next we hear of him, he is in the convent of the Augustinian friars at Erfurth. The friends of Luther were greatly surprised at the step he had taken; and more especially was this the case with his honored father. He had exerted himself to the utmost to support his son at the university, hoping to see him a learned barrister or statesman, and filling a large space in the eyes of the world; and now, by one fatal step, all his ambitious projects were overthrown. He wrote an angry letter to his son, threatening him, if he persisted, with

the entire loss of his favor, and with being utterly disinherited from a father's love. After a while, however, the feelings of the father softened ; and he reluctantly submitted to that which he had no power to avert.

The monks, at the first, were exceedingly complaisant to the new-comer, applauding his decision, his renunciation of the world. Ere long, however, they began to treat him harshly, and to impose upon him the most menial services. Nevertheless, he bore it all with patience, and the more so, as he hoped, by self-mortification, to acquire that humility and holiness, in pursuit of which he had become an inmate of the cloister.

Luther found in the convent, as he had in the university, a Latin Bible, to which he had recourse daily. He began at this time to study the sacred books in the original tongues, and thus prepare himself, without knowing it, for the most perfect and useful of all his works,— his translation of the Bible into German.

But it was not so much for study that

Luther had renounced the world, and im-
mured himself in the recesses of the cloister:
it was that he might crucify the flesh, se-
cure the remission of sins, and be made holy.
He was very punctual, therefore, in observing
all the prescribed penances and rules. He
spared neither fastings, macerations, nor
vigils. On one occasion, he passed seven
whole weeks almost entirely without sleep.
A little bread and a single herring were often
his only food; but, the more he tortured
himself, the more anxious he became. He
had formed some conception now of what it
is to be holy; and he was distressed at find-
ing, neither in his heart nor his life, any
appearance of that holiness which he saw to
be needful. Those around him directed him
to perform good works, and in this way to
satisfy the divine justice; but “what good
works,” said he, “can proceed out of a heart
like mine? How can I, with works polluted
even in their source and motive, stand before
a holy Judge?”

Luther was, at this period, greatly agitated

and distressed. He moved like a spectre through the long aisles of his cloister, uttering only sighs and groans. He found to his sorrow, that, though by entering the convent he had procured a change of raiment, he had experienced no change of heart. He performed penances, repeated prayers, and confessed daily; but all was of no use: the burthen was still upon his spirit, and naught that he had power to do could remove it. Under the anguish of his mind, his bodily powers failed, his strength forsook him, and he was rapidly drawing to the gates of death. On one occasion he was found on the floor, in a state of entire unconsciousness; and it was a long time before he could be restored. Thus hardly and terribly did this poor sinner suffer, in ignorance of the true method of salvation, to work out a righteousness of his own.

But the day of his deliverance was at hand. John Staupitz, the vicar-general of the Augustinians in Germany, made a visit to Erfurth. He had passed through troubles

very similar to those of Luther, and had found deliverance in Christ. He was the very person, therefore, to deal with Luther; and he instructed him in the most prudent and faithful manner. He directed his thoughts away from himself, and led them up to the cross of Christ. “Instead of torturing yourself for your faults, cast yourself into the arms of the Redeemer. Trust in him, in the spotless righteousness of his life, and the expiatory sacrifice of his death. Do not shrink away from God. He is not against you: it is you rather who are estranged and averse from him.”

These were strange words to the ears of Luther. He listened, and pondered, and listened again. He flew to the Scriptures, and consulted all the passages relating to conversion and justification; and he found that it was even so as his friend had said. A new light now began to enter his mind, and new consolations sprang up in his soul. “Yes,” he exclaimed, “there is hope in Christ. It is Christ himself that comforts

me with these sweet and precious words.” The first religious exercises of Luther seem to have been those of faith and trust ; but these were soon followed by the meltings of true penitence. “ Formerly, there was naught in the Bible more bitter to me than the thought of repentance ; but now there is nothing more pleasant and sweet. All those scriptures which once alarmed me seem now to flow together, and smile and play around my heart. Oh, how blessed are all God’s precepts, when we read them not in books alone, but in the faith of Christ ! ”

But these consolations of Luther were not without seasons of interruption. Sin was again felt upon his tender conscience ; and then he relapsed into his former troubles. “ Oh, my sin, my sin ! ” he one day exclaimed in the presence of Staupitz, and in a tone of the bitterest agony. “ Well,” replied the latter, “ would you be only the *semblance* of a sinner, and have only the *semblance* of a Saviour ? Know that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of those who are real

and great sinners, and deserving of utter condemnation."

Luther had trouble at this time, not only with the state of his heart, but with some of the higher doctrines of the gospel. He wished to penetrate the deep things of God, to unveil their mysteries, and comprehend the incomprehensible. But his friend Staupitz checked him. He told him that he must understand the plainer things first. He must not attempt to fathom God, but confine himself to what of his character is revealed in Christ. We cannot understand God, except through Christ.

Before leaving the convent, the vicar-general gave Luther a Bible; and directed him to the diligent and persevering study of it. Better advice than this was never given; nor was any advice ever more faithfully followed. The mind of Luther was now in a state to receive and love the truth. It was to him as cold water to a thirsty soul. The soil of his heart had been thoroughly ploughed; and in it the incorruptible seed

took deep root. It sprang up, and brought forth fruit an hundred-fold.

From this time, Martin Luther was a new man, and entered upon a new spiritual life. He was soon removed from the convent to his professorship at Wittemburg, and there entered upon his contest “with spiritual wickedness in high places;” and this contest he pursued, before legates and pontiffs, nobles and diets, emperors and kings, until half Europe was emancipated from papal bondage, until the word of the Lord had free course among the nations, ran, and was glorified. Yet, from every step of his triumphant progress, he could look back upon the change accomplished in him at Erfurth as the turning-point in his eventful history, the beginning of his great usefulness, the commencement of his walk with God.

SECTION V.

CONVERSION OF JOHN BUNYAN.

THE “ingenious dreamer” began to dream almost as soon as he was born.* “Even in my childhood,” says he, “the Lord did scare me with dreams, and terrify me with fearful visions. Once I dreamed that the end of the world was come, and that the earth quaked, and opened its mouth to receive me. Again, I dreamed that I was dropping into the flames among the damned, and that a person in white raiment suddenly plucked me, as a brand, out of the fire.”

Though these dreams must have made some impression on the child, they did not restrain him from the paths of sin. He grew up in the indulgence of the grossest

* Bunyan was born at Elstow, near Bedford, England, in the year 1628.

vices, — lying, stealing, profane swearing, sabbath-breaking, and the like. Yet he was not without some special restraints. One day, while at play with his wicked companions, a voice seemed to come to him from above: “Wilt thou leave thy sins, and go to heaven; or have thy sins, and go to hell?” This put him into such consternation that he was constrained to leave his sports; and, looking up to heaven, he thought he saw the Lord Jesus looking down upon him, and severely threatening him for his ungodly practices.

At another time, while belching out blasphemies, he was rebuked by a woman who was herself a notorious sinner. “She told me that I was the ungodliest fellow for swearing that she ever heard in all her life, and that I was enough to spoil all the youth in the town, if they but came in my company. “At this reproof,” says Bunyan, “I was silenced, and put to shame, and that, too, before the God of heaven. For somehow or other, from this time I left off swearing: and, not only so, I undertook to reform my life;

and in this I so far succeeded that I really thought I pleased God as well as any man in England. My neighbors, too, did take me for a very godly man, and did marvel much at so great an alteration in my life and manners: and this gratified me exceedingly; for, though I was nothing but a poor, painted hypocrite, I loved to be talked of as one that was truly godly."

But this self-righteousness and self-complacence did not last long. Very soon it was most effectually broken up; and Bunyan tells us how it was done. "Being at work at my trade" (which was that of a tinker), "in one of the streets of Bedford, I saw several poor women sitting at the door of a house, and talking about the things of God. I drew near enough to hear what was said; but, though I heard, I understood not: their talk was about the new birth, and the work of God in their hearts. They told of their miserable state by nature, and how God had visited their souls with his love in Christ Jesus, and with what words of promise they

had been refreshed, comforted, and supported against the temptations of Satan ; and methought they spoke with such pleasantness of Scripture language, and with such an appearance of grace in all that they said, that they were to me as if they had found a new world.

“ After hearing them a while, I left them, but not without the most serious misgivings as to my own spiritual state ; for I was sure that I knew nothing of the new birth, nor of the comforts of the words of promise, nor of the deceitfulness and treachery of my own wicked heart.”

Bunyan was so much interested in the conversation of these women, that he frequently sought their company ; and, the more he saw and heard them, the more he was satisfied that he had no religion. This thought filled him with terror and distress ; and now, for several years, he was a miserable being, the sport of his impressions, and of manifold temptations. Like most of the pious people among whom he dwelt, he laid great stress,

upon particular thoughts darted into his mind, or upon passages of Scripture suddenly brought to his recollection. If these were favorable to him, he would have a little hope, not that he was already converted, but that at some time he might be. But if these were against him, as they generally were, then he was in black despair: he was not one of the elect; or he was given up of God, and his day of grace was past; or he had committed the unpardonable sin. During much of this time, he durst not pray for himself, nor durst he ask others to pray for him; since, for those who have committed the sin unto death, Christians are not allowed to pray (1 John v. 16).

We never read this part of Bunyan's spiritual history, as detailed by himself, without longing to be near him, that we might whisper a word of instruction and consolation in his ear. Strange, that with the plain directions of the Bible open before him, "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out;" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,

and thou shalt be saved,"—he should turn away from such precious offers, and be driven almost to desperation by the suggestions of the wicked one.

But at length, to use his own language, "the time of comfort came. I heard one preach from these words: 'Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair' (Cant. iv. 1). The preacher dwelt much on the love of Christ for his people. He loved them when under temptation and desertion; loved them when they were hated of the world. As I was going home, these words were much in my thoughts, and began to kindle in my spirit, 'Thou art my love, thou art my love.' As they ran through my mind twenty times over, they waxed stronger and warmer; and I began to look up, I began to give place to the blessed word; and I said, 'Thou art my love, thou art my love; and *nothing shall ever separate thee from my love.*' And with that my heart was filled full of comfort and hope; and now I would believe that my sins would all be forgiven me: yea, I was now so taken

with the love and mercy of God, that I could scarcely contain till I got home. I thought I could have spoken of Christ's love, and have told of his mercy to me, even to the very crows that sat upon the ploughed land before me, had they been capable of understanding me. Wherefore I said in my soul, with much gladness, 'Oh that I had a pen and ink here! I would write this down before I go any further; for surely I cannot forget this in forty years.'"

Here, evidently, was the conversion of Bunyan; and it consisted in the gushing forth of *love*, — love to God and love to the Saviour, — complacent, grateful love for their infinite love and mercy towards him.

Still, the trials of Bunyan were not ended. In his state and habit of mind, this was not to be expected. It was not long before his temptations returned; and he was tossed and buffeted by them for many months. At one time, he was tempted to deny the existence of God, and the truth and inspiration of the Bible. At another

time, he thought himself possessed of the devil; and then that he had sinned against the Holy Ghost. If he attempted to pray, he felt the devil behind him, pulling his clothes, and trying to stop him. He was once beset with the temptation to sell his Saviour, as Judas did; and the thought kept running in his mind night and day: "Sell him, sell him, sell him!" And because once, in his desperation, he had allowed the thought to escape him, "Let him go, if he will," he suffered for a long time all the horrors of despair. He had done just as Esau did, sold his birthright; and, like Esau, he could find no place for repentance. He had sold his Saviour for less than Judas received, and deserved a greater damnation.

It is not to be understood, however, that these temptations constantly prevailed. At times he was relieved: hope beamed upon him; and his heart was filled with love and joy. He had great comfort in reading "Luther's Commentary on the Galatians." His first love was restored to him; and he

was enabled to say, “I loved Christ dearly. My soul clung to him ; my affections cleaved to him : I felt my love to him as hot as fire.”

Nor were the temptations of Bunyan, while they lasted, altogether without profit. They gave him a knowledge of his own heart, and qualified him to deal with others in like circumstances. They prepared him to write “The Pilgrim’s Progress” and “The Holy War;” and no one can fully understand these precious allegories, without first learning the experience of their author, as detailed in his “Grace abounding to the Chief of Sinners.”

When the mind of Bunyan had become in some measure settled, he joined the Baptist church in Bedford ; and in the year 1656, when he was twenty-eight years old, he began to preach the everlasting gospel ; and in this work he persevered,—except that, for doing it, he was twelve years shut up in Bedford jail,—to the end of life. He was a burning and shining light while he lived ; and his light still shines, though he

has been a hundred years dead. He had many souls given him as the seals of his ministry, and secured a name and fame among his brethren which will never be forgotten.

SECTION VI.

CONVERSION OF LADY HUNTINGTON AND WILLIAM COWPER.

LADY HUNTINGTON.

SELINA SHIRLEY, afterwards Lady Huntington, was the second daughter of Earl Ferrars, and was born at Churtley, Aug. 24, 1707. Almost from infancy, an uncommon seriousness shaded the natural gladness of her childhood. When only nine years old, she was much affected by the death and burial of one of her playmates. While weeping at the grave, a deep concern as to her own future state took possession of her heart; and, with many tears, she earnestly implored God, that, whenever he should be pleased to take her away, he would deliver her from all her fears, and

give her a happy departure. She often visited the grave of her little friend, and ever retained a lively sense of the affecting scene she had there witnessed.

In her juvenile days, she often retired for prayer to a particular closet, where she could not be observed; and in all her troubles found relief in pouring out the feelings of her heart to God.

At the age of twenty-one, she was married to Theophilus, Earl of Huntington, a man of high and exemplary character, and thus became allied to a family whose tastes and principles coincided with her own. During the first years of her married life, it was her principal endeavor, amid all the splendors and excitements of high English society, to maintain a conscience void of offence. She strove to fulfil the various duties of her position with scrupulous exactness. She was sincere, just, and upright; she prayed, fasted, and gave alms; she was courteous, considerate, and charitable. Still, she was not spiritually happy. "I have done virtuously," she could

say; “but how can I tell when I have done enough? I am sure that I have not satisfied the claims of God’s holy law.”

Lord Huntington had several sisters, whose thoughtful cast of mind made them particularly welcome at his house. One of these, Lady Margaret Hastings, had recently been converted under the ministry of Rev. Benjamin Ingham, a particular friend of the Wesleys, to whom she was afterwards married. In conversation with Lady Huntington, she opened to her the way of pardon and peace through a crucified Saviour, and spoke, at length, of her own blessed experience: “Since I have known and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ,” she said, “I have been as happy as an angel.” This remark startled Lady Huntington. It taught her, that, with all her seriousness and apparent goodness, she was yet a stranger to the hopes and consolations of the gospel. In her anxieties on this subject, she was thrown upon a bed of sickness, and brought apparently near to the grave. The fear of death fell terribly upon

her. It was to no purpose that she reminded herself of the uprightness of her past life. Her best righteousness, so far from justifying her before God, appeared only to increase her condemnation. She saw that her “heart was deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ;” that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” When upon the point of perishing, in her own apprehension, the words of Lady Margaret were brought home to her heart ; and she felt a strong desire, renouncing every other hope, to cast herself upon Christ alone for pardon and salvation. To this end, she lifted up her heart to God in most importunate prayer, and was enabled to make the surrender for which she prayed. Immediately, all her fears and distress were removed ; and her soul was filled with joy and peace. The Sun of Righteousness arose upon her, with healing in his beams. The scales fell from her eyes, opening a passage for the light of life ; and death and darkness fled before it. Viewing herself as a brand

plucked from the burning, she could but adore that grace which had snatched her from the brink of ruin, and filled her soul with the joy of heaven. The conversion here recorded commenced in *faith*, and, as is usual in such cases, was followed with an abundance of peace.

From the moment of Lady Huntington's change, her bodily disease took a favorable turn. She was soon restored to health, and entered at once upon a new course of life. She became a regular attendant on the preaching of the Methodists, entertained them at her house, and had frequent meetings there, to which the nobility were invited. Even Chesterfield and Bolingbroke were repeatedly present to hear Whitefield, and seemed not a little affected with some of his discourses. She labored for the poor as well as the rich, relieved their wants, and sought their happiness here and hereafter. Her liberality extended beyond her own church. She had correspondence with Drs. Watts and Doddridge, and with other emi-

nent dissenting ministers. She had repeated interviews with the king and queen, and was regarded by them with peculiar favor.

Lady Huntington experienced no opposition from her noble husband while he lived; but subsequent to his death, and that of the most of her children, she took a more decided stand for the gospel. After the separation between Wesley and Whitefield, she attached herself to the interests of the latter, and became the great patron and supporter of the Calvinistic Methodists. She built chapels for them, supported ministers, and, by the aid of opulent persons,—many of them connections of her family,—established a college at Travecca (in South Wales) for the education of preachers. This college was afterwards removed to Cheshunt (Hertfordshire), where it still exists.

Lady Huntington died June 17, 1791, at the advanced age of eighty-four. When the blood-vessel broke which was the occasion of her death, she said to one of her attend-

ants, “I am well: all is well, — well forever. Wherever I turn my eyes, whether I live or die, I see nothing but victory.” Almost her last words were, “My work is done: I have nothing now to do but to go to my Father.”

WILLIAM COWPER.

Most of my readers are acquainted with the early history of this gifted, amiable, but often unhappy man, the author of “The Task,” and of some of our sweetest and most beautiful hymns. He was constitutionally predisposed to melancholy and derangement; and while under deep convictions of sin, especially the sin of self-murder, which he had attempted, he fell into a state of complete despair. He gives the following account of his deliverance from this state, after remaining in it for several months:—

“Having risen one morning, with somewhat of a more cheerful feeling, I repaired to my room, where breakfast waited for me. While I sat at table, I found the cloud of horror, which had so long hung over me,

was every moment passing away ; and every moment came fraught with hope. I was continually more and more persuaded that I was not utterly doomed to destruction. The way of salvation was still, however, hid from my eyes ; nor did I see it at all clearer than before my illness. I only thought, that, if it pleased God to spare me, I would lead a better life ; and that I would yet escape hell, if a religious observance of my duty would secure me from it. Thus may the terror of the Lord make a Pharisee ; but only the sweet voice of mercy in the gospel can make a Christian.

“ But the happy period which was to shake off my fetters, and afford me a clear opening of the free mercy of God in Christ Jesus, had now arrived. I flung myself into a chair, near the window, and, seeing a Bible there, ventured once more to apply to it for comfort and instruction. The first verse I saw was the twenty-fifth of the third chapter of Romans : ‘ Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to

declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God,— to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.' Immediately I received strength to *believe*; and the full beams of the Sun of Righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement which Christ had made, saw my pardon sealed in his blood, and all the fulness and completeness of his salvation. In a moment I believed, and received the gospel. And now, unless the almighty arm had been under me, I think I should have died with gratitude and joy. My eyes filled with tears, and my voice choked with transport: I could only look up to heaven with silent fear, overwhelmed with love and wonder. But the work of the Spirit is best described in his own words: it is 'a joy unspeakable, and full of glory.'

" Thus was my heavenly Father in Christ Jesus pleased to give me the full assurance of faith, and, out of a strong, unbelieving

heart, to raise up a child unto Abraham. How glad should I now have been to have spent every moment in praise and thanksgiving! I lost no opportunity of repairing to a throne of grace. I flew to it with an earnestness irresistible, and never to be satisfied. Could I help it? Could I do otherwise than love and rejoice in my reconciled Father in Christ Jesus? The Lord had enlarged my heart; and I ran in the way of his commandments.

“For many succeeding weeks, tears were ready to flow, if I did but speak of the gospel, or so much as mention the name of Jesus. To rejoice day and night was all my employment. Too happy to sleep much, I thought it was lost time that was spent in slumber. Oh that the ardor of my first love had continued! But I have known many a lifeless and unhallowed hour since,—long intervals of darkness, interrupted by short returns of peace and joy in believing.”

It will be seen that the conversion of Cowper, like that of Lady Huntington,

began in *faith*. The first holy exercise of which he was conscious was one of faith. He had opened to him the way of salvation by Christ ; and instantly he embraced it. He embraced it with all the ardor of a despairing soul ; and at once he was filled with an almost insupportable joy. Could he help it ? Could he do otherwise than rejoice in his reconciled Father in Christ Jesus ?

SECTION VII.

CONVERSION OF COL. JAMES GARDINER AND ANDREW FULLER.

COL. JAMES GARDINER.

COL. GARDINER was born on the 16th of January, 1688, — the year of the glorious revolution which placed William and Mary upon the throne. His father was a military officer, and died young. His mother was an excellent Christian lady, who did every thing in her power for the temporal and spiritual welfare of her son. Like his father, he was trained for the army, and actually held an ensign's commission when only fourteen years old. His early life was one of sinful indulgence, in which he seemed to take so much delight, that he was proverbially called “the happy rake.” Still, he

was not happy. On the contrary, he was so miserable, that when, on one convivial occasion, a dog chanced to pass through the room, he could not forbear saying to himself, “Oh, that I were that dog ! ”

One evening in the summer of 1719, while he was sitting up late to meet a criminal appointment, he took up a religious book which his mother had given him, and began to read it: and, as he read, he thought he saw a blaze of light fall on the book; and, lifting up his eyes to see what caused it, he beheld before him an appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, surrounded on all sides with a halo of glory. At the same time, he heard a voice, saying, “O sinner! did I suffer all this for you? And are these the returns ? ”

The probability is, that he saw and heard all this in vision,—in a state of partial sleep ; though he seemed to himself, and constantly affirmed, that he was fully awake.

Overwhelmed with what he saw, he sunk back into his chair, and continued there, he

knew not how long, in a state of insensibility. When he came to himself, the vision had departed, and he saw it no more.

He rose from his seat in the greatest excitement, and walked back and forth in his chamber till he was ready to fall down in his agony, regarding himself as the vilest monster on the face of the earth, who had all his life been crucifying, by his sins, the Son of God afresh. He had also such a view of the goodness and glory of God as led him to abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes. He at once gave judgment against himself, that he was most justly worthy of eternal damnation. He was astonished that he had not been struck dead in the midst of his wickedness. Still, he did not so much suffer from the fear of hell, though he expected it would soon be his portion, as from a sense of his horrible ingratitude to the God of his life, and to that blessed Redeemer who had been so marvellously set forth as crucified before him.

In this state of mind he continued for some

considerable time, mourning over his sins, but indulging no hope of pardon and eternal life: Yet he seems, like Paul, to have been converted almost upon the spot: for before he left his chamber the following day, as his biographer (Dr. Doddridge) remarks, “the whole frame and disposition of his soul was changed; so that he became, and continued to the end of life, an exemplary and devoted Christian,—the very opposite of what he had been before.”

The first exercises of this man’s renewed heart were those of deep and thorough *repentance*, — a godly sorrow and self-loathing for sin. Of course, he could not come at once into the possession of that overwhelming joy which was the experience of Cowper. Still, the conversion of the former was no less real and satisfactory than that of the latter.

Col. Gardiner was a brave Christian officer, who fell at the battle of Preston-Pans, fighting for his king against the Popish Pretender, on the 21st of September, 1745.

ANDREW FULLER.

This excellent man was born at Wicken (Cambridgeshire, England), in 1754 ; was educated among the Particular or Calvinistic Baptists, and continued attached to that denomination as long as he lived. In his youth, he had frequent convictions of sin, and frequent struggles between his inclinations and his conscience, between the strivings of the Spirit and the suggestions of his evil heart. He often spent his evenings in vain and sinful company, to which he was strongly attached, and on leaving which he was in great distress. The instructions which he received, too, were not favorable to his speedy conversion. Instead of leading him directly to Christ, they tended rather to hold him in a waiting posture, — waiting for the great work to be performed. Still, his impressions continued ; and the Spirit was not grieved away.

“ In the autumn of 1769,” says he, “ my convictions returned upon me with such concern as, I trust, issued in my conversion.

One morning I walked out, with an unusual load of guilt upon my conscience. The remembrance of my sins, the breach of my vows, and the shocking termination of my former impressions and hopes, all uniting together, formed a burthen which I knew not how to bear. The reproaches of a guilty conscience seemed like the gnawing worm of hell. The very fire of the bottomless pit seemed to burn within me. I saw that God would be perfectly just in sending me to hell ; and that to hell I must go, unless I were saved by mere grace, and, as it were, in spite of myself. I felt, that, if God were to forgive my past sins, I should again destroy myself, and that in less than a day's time. I continued crying, ‘What must I do ? What must I do ?’ For, with the instructions I had received, I knew not what to do. I durst not promise amendment, for I saw that such promises were a delusion ; and to hope for forgiveness in the course I was then pursuing was the height of presumption ; and to think of Christ, after having so often abused his grace, was too

much: so I had no light, and no refuge. I was like a drowning man, looking every way for help, and catching at something with which to save his life. In this deplorable, despairing state, I thought of the resolution of Job: ‘Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.’ I paused, and repeated the words over and over; and every repetition seemed to kindle a ray of hope.

“According to the instructions I had received, I supposed that no sinner had a *warrant* to believe in Christ, but there must be some kind of qualification to entitle him to do so; and I was sure that I had no such qualification. I regarded my case as resembling that of Esther, who went into the king’s presence *contrary to law*, and at the peril of her life; and I resolved to do as she did. I felt something attracting me to Christ; and I said, ‘I must, I will,—yes, I *will*, trust my lost soul to his hands; and, if I perish, I perish.’ And here I found rest for my troubled spirit. My heart felt at one with Christ, and dead to every other object around me.

“ From this time, my former wicked courses were all forsaken. I had no desire for them. For those evils, a glance at which before would have set my passions in a flame, I felt no inclination. In reference to them, I could now say, with joy and triumph, ‘ My soul is as a weaned child ! ’ ”

Soon after this, Mr. Fuller became a member of the Baptist church in Soham. He early commenced speaking and praying in religious meetings ; and this he did so much to the edification of his brethren, that, after a year or two, they called and licensed him to be a preacher of the gospel. He lived to be one of the most useful ministers in England or in the world. He died peacefully, triumphantly, in the spring of 1815, at the age of sixty-one.

SECTION VIII.

CONVERSION OF PRESIDENT EDWARDS AND DAVID BRAINERD.

PRESIDENT EDWARDS.

THIS distinguished divine was the son of a minister, was religiously educated, was the subject of frequent, solemn impressions, and was regular in the performance of religious duties, from his childhood. Soon after leaving college, when about seventeen years of age, he experienced a change in his affections, which he describes in the following manner :—

“ From my childhood up, my mind had been full of objections against the doctrine of God’s sovereignty in choosing whom he would to eternal life, and leaving others to perish in their sins. It appeared like a horrible doctrine to me ; but I remember the time very well when I became convinced,

and fully satisfied, as to the sovereignty of God, and his justice in thus disposing of men according to his sovereign pleasure.

“ The first instance that I remember of that inward, sweet delight in God and divine things, in which I have lived much of the time since, was on reading these words: ‘ Now, unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever, amen.’ As I read the words, there came into my soul, and was diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the divine Being,—a new sense, quite different from any thing I ever experienced before. Never any words of Scripture seemed to me as these words did.

“ From about that time, I began to have new apprehensions and ideas of Christ, and the glorious way of salvation by him. An inward sweet sense of these things came into my heart; and my soul was led away in pleasant views and contemplations of them. My mind was much occupied in reading and

meditating upon Christ, on the beauty and excellency of his person, and the lovely way of salvation, by free grace, through him. I found no books so delightful to me as those that treated of these subjects. The sense which I had of divine things would often, of a sudden, kindle up a sweet burning in my heart,—an ardor of soul that I know not how to express.

“ Not long after I began to experience these things, I had a conversation with my father on the subject. I was much affected by the discourse ; and, when it was ended, I walked abroad in a solitary place for contemplation. And while I was there, looking up on the sky and clouds, there came into my mind a sweet sense of the glorious majesty and grace of God, which I know not how to express. I seemed to see them both in a sweet conjunction,—majesty and meekness joined together. It was a sweet and gentle and holy majesty, and also a majestic meekness, an awful sweetness, a high and great and holy gentleness.

“ After this, my sense of divine things gradually increased, and became more and more lively, and had more of that inward sweetness. The appearance of every thing was altered. There seemed to be a calm, sweet cast or appearance of divine glory in almost every thing. God’s excellency, his wisdom, his purity, and love seemed to shine in every thing ; in the sun, moon, and stars ; in the clouds and the blue sky ; in the grass, flowers, and trees ; in the water, and in all nature. I used often to sit. and view the moon for a long time ; and, in the day, I spent much time in viewing the clouds and sky, that I might behold the glory of God in these things, in the mean time singing forth, in a low voice, my contemplations of the Creator and Redeemer.

“ I had, then, great satisfaction as to my good estate ; but this did not content me. I had vehement longings of soul after God and Christ, and after more holiness, wherewith my heart seemed to be full, and ready to break. I often felt a mourning and lament-

ing in my heart that I had not turned to God sooner, and thus had more time to grow in grace. I spent most of my time, for years, in thinking of divine things, often walking alone in the woods and solitary places for meditation, soliloquy, prayer, and converse with God ; and it was my usual manner, at such times, to sing forth my contemplations. Wherever I was, I was almost constantly in ejaculatory prayer. Prayer seemed to be as natural to me as the breath by which the inward burnings of my heart had vent."

I have quoted the more largely from the early recorded experience of Pres. Edwards, not only that the fact and form of his conversion might appear, but that my readers might see the foundation which was laid in youth for the subsequent spiritual elevation and usefulness of this great and good man. His conversion commenced obviously in *love*, —in such new and glorious views of the character of God as filled and fired his soul with love and admiration. And commen-

cing his Christian life in such a close walk with God, in all the exercises of love and duty, it is no wonder that God exalted him among his people, and made him perhaps the most eminent teacher of divine things which America has known.

DAVID BRAINERD.

Brainerd, like Pres. Edwards, was the subject of religious impressions from his early youth. He attended regularly to the duties of religion in public and in private, and earnestly sought to *do something* to recommend himself to the favor of heaven; but, being continually disappointed in attempts of this nature, his heart at length broke out into a violent and sensible quarrel with God. He was displeased with the strictness of the divine law, with the prescribed and unalterable conditions of salvation, and especially with the doctrine of divine sovereignty. After continuing in this state for some considerable time, seeking rest and finding none, he was brought to acquiesce in

those views of God which he had formerly opposed, and to rejoice in hope of his glory. His conversion, as to the form of it, was strikingly similar to that of his great teacher and patron, Pres. Edwards.

"I was attempting to pray, but found no heart to engage in that or any other duty. My former concern, exercises, and religious impressions seemed to be gone. I thought that the Spirit of God had quite left me; but still I was not distressed, though disconsolate, as if there was nothing in heaven or earth that could make me happy. Having thus been endeavoring to pray, though in a very stupid and senseless manner, for near half an hour, then, as I was walking alone in a dark, thick grove, *an unspeakable glory* seemed to open to the view and apprehension of my soul. I do not mean any *external brightness*; for I saw no such thing. Nor do I intend any imagination of a body of light somewhere in the third heavens, nor any thing of that nature; but it was a new inward apprehension or view that I had of

God, and as I never had before, nor any thing which had the least resemblance of it. I stood still, I wondered, I admired! I knew that I had never before seen any thing comparable to it for excellence and beauty. It was widely different from all the conceptions that I ever had of God, or of things divine. My soul rejoiced with joy unspeakable to see such a God, such a glorious divine Being; and I was inwardly pleased and satisfied that he should be *God over all* for ever and ever. My soul was so captivated and delighted with the excellence, loveliness, greatness, and other perfections of God, that I was swallowed up in him,—at least, to that degree that I had no thought, at first, about my own salvation, and scarce reflected that there was such a creature as myself. I continued in this state of inward joy, peace, and astonishment until near dark, without any sensible abatement; and then I began to think and examine what I had seen, and felt sweetly composed in my mind all the following evening. I felt myself in a new world;

and every thing about me appeared in a different aspect from what it had done. At this time, *the way of salvation* opened to me with such infinite wisdom, suitableness, and excellency, that I wondered I should ever think of any other way. I was amazed that I had not dropped my own contrivances, and complied with this lovely, blessed, and excellent way before. If I could have been saved by my own duties, or in any other way that I had formerly contrived, my whole soul would now have refused it. I wondered that all the world did not see and comply with this way of salvation by the righteousness of Christ. The sweet relish of what I then felt continued with me for several days, almost constantly. Wherever I was,—sitting, walking, lying down, and rising up,—I could not but sweetly rejoice in God."

David Brainerd died in the thirtieth year of his age ; but he lived long enough to accomplish a work, and acquire an influence, which will never die. How many young ministers have been incited by his example to devote

themselves to the service of Christ among the heathen! And how many missionaries have been sustained and encouraged in their arduous labors, by reading the story of his trials and successes among the Indians at Kaunameck and Crosweeksung!

SECTION IX.

CONVERSION OF DR. HOPKINS OF NEWPORT, AND DR. EMMONS.

DR. HOPKINS OF NEWPORT.

THE late Dr. Samuel Hopkins of Newport was a self-righteous and confident professor of religion for some time before he came to a saving knowledge of the truth. He was awakened to a deep sense of his true character and danger while a member of Yale College, through the instrumentality of David Brainerd. "After Brainerd left my room," says he, "to which he had come for religious conversation, the conviction fixed upon me that I was no Christian. The evil of my heart, the hardness and unbelief of it, came more and more into view; and the evil case in which I was appeared more and more dreadful. I felt myself a guilty, justly-

condemned creature ; and my hope of relief by obtaining conversion failed more and more : and, as all help failed, my condition appeared darker from day to day. I felt myself to be nothing but ignorance, stupidity, and guilt. Thus I continued for some weeks, generally retired, except when I attended private meetings of young people for praise and prayer. At length, as I was one evening in my closet, engaged in meditation and devotion, a new and wonderful scene opened to my view. I had a sense of the being and presence of God as I never had before ; it being more of a reality, and more affecting and glorious, than I had ever before perceived. And the character of Jesus Christ, the Mediator, came into view, and appeared such a reality and so glorious, and the way of salvation by him so wise, important, and desirable, that I was astonished at myself that I had never seen these things before, which were so plain, pleasing, and wonderful. I longed to have all men see and know these things, as they now appeared to me.

“ I was greatly affected in view of my own depravity, — the sinfulness, guilt, and odiousness of my character ; and tears flowed in great plenty. After some time, I left my closet, and went into the adjoining room. No other person being there, I walked the room, all intent upon these subjects. I took up Watts’s version of the Psalms, opened at the fifty-first, and read, with strong affection, the first, second, and third parts, in long metre. I made it all my own language, and thought it was the language of my heart to God. I dwelt upon it with pleasure, and wept much. And, when I had laid aside the book, my mind continued fixed upon the subject, in the exercise of devotion, confession, adoration, petition, in which I seemed to pour out my heart with great freedom to God. I gave all attention to the things of religion, in which most around me appeared to be engaged. Among the students, there were many instances of conversion ; and I felt a peculiar pleasing affection for those who appeared to be Christians.”

We have here another instance of conversion, very like in form to those of Edwards and Brainerd,— new and glorious views of God, accompanied with new affections of love, admiration, and devotion. After leaving college, Hopkins became a pupil of Edwards, and was long a burning and shining light in our American churches.

DR. NATHANIEL EMMONS.

Dr. Emmons was born of pious parents, was religiously educated, and from childhood was the subject of frequent solemn impressions. His life, too, was moral and amiable; and he had a great desire to be a minister of Christ, though he did not think himself prepared for the work. In this state of mind, he passed through college, and even entered on his professional studies. “ Still,” he says, “ I never indulged a thought of preaching, unless I had some good reason to believe that I was the subject of a saving change; for I viewed a graceless minister as a most inconsistent,

criminal, and odious character. Accordingly, when I began to read divinity, I began a constant practice of daily reading the Bible, and of praying to God in secret. With such resolutions, I entertained a hope that God would very soon grant me his special grace, and give me satisfactory evidence of this qualification for the ministry."

After pursuing this course for a time, Dr. Emmons concluded to change his theological teacher, and placed himself under the instruction of the late Dr. Smalley of Berlin, Conn. "His plain and instructive preaching," says the writer, "increased my concern, and gave me a more sensible conviction of the plague of my own heart, and of my real opposition to the way of salvation revealed in the gospel. My heart rose against the doctrine of divine sovereignty; and I felt greatly embarrassed with respect to the use of means. I read certain books which convinced me that the best desires and prayers of sinners were altogether selfish, criminal, and displeasing to God. I knew not what to do, nor where to

go for relief. A deep sense of my total depravity of heart, and of the sovereignty of God, in having mercy on whom he will have mercy, destroyed my dependence on men and means, and made me almost despair of ever attaining salvation, or becoming fit for any thing but the damnation of hell. But one afternoon, when my hopes were gone, I had a peculiar discovery of the divine perfections, and of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, which filled my mind with a joy and serenity to which I had ever before been a perfect stranger. This was followed by a peculiar spirit of benevolence to all my fellow-men, whether friends or foes; and I was transported with the thought of the unspeakable blessedness of the day when universal benevolence should prevail among all mankind. I felt a peculiar complacence in good men, but thought they were extremely stupid, because they did not appear to be more delighted with the gospel, and more engaged to promote the cause of Christ. I pitied the deplorable condition of ignorant, stupid sinners, and thought I could

preach so plainly as to convince everybody of the glory and importance of the gospel."

In form, the conversion of Dr. Emmons was very like to that of Pres. Edwards and Brainerd and Dr. Hopkins. He had new views of the perfections and character of God, inducing a conscious love to that character, and benevolence to all mankind. About six months after his conversion, Dr. Emmons made a public profession of religion, and soon commenced the work of preaching the gospel,—a work which he continued with unprecedented celebrity and usefulness for almost sixty years. He probably wrote and delivered more *good* sermons than any man who has ever lived in New England. He voluntarily retired from the pulpit thirteen years before his death.

SECTION X.

CONVERSION OF SAMUEL J. MILLS, DR. CORNELIUS, AND
REV. SYLVESTER LARNED.

SAMUEL J. MILLS.

THE spiritual career of this devoted servant of Christ and the Church commenced in the following manner: When about fifteen years of age, his attention was specially directed to the great concerns of the soul. For two full years he continued in a state of anxiety, quarrelling with the sovereignty of God, and often wishing that he had never been born. One morning, as he was about to leave home to return to school in a neighboring town, his pious mother took the opportunity of inquiring into the state of his mind, and begged him to make an ingenuous disclosure of his feelings. For a moment he was silent, and

wept ; but his heart was too full long to suppress the emotions produced by so affecting a request. He raised his head ; and, with his eyes streaming with tears, he exclaimed, “ Oh that I had never been born ! Oh that I had never been born ! For two years I have been sorry that God ever made me.” What reply could such a mother make to such a disclosure ? It was given her, in that same hour, what she should speak. “ My son,” said she, “ you *are* born ; and you can never throw off your existence, nor your everlasting accountability for all your conduct.” This thought was like a dagger to his soul. His mother expressed the fear that he had never thoroughly seen the evil of his own heart ; to which he replied : “ I have seen to the very bottom of hell ! ”

In this frame of mind, he took a melancholy leave of his parents for the winter. What took place under his father’s roof may be easily conjectured. His farewell to his mother drove her to her knees : she felt his sorrows and her own ; nor did she leave her

closet till she found relief in the confidence that God would have mercy upon her dear child. And it ought to be recorded, that, on that very morning, it pleased the Holy Ghost to knock off the chains from this unhappy prisoner, and introduce him into the liberty of the sons of God. He had not walked far before he had such a view of the perfections of God that he wondered he had never seen their beauty and glory before. There was nothing in God now that distressed him. He had lost all his opposition to the divine sovereignty ; and such were his views of this adorable perfection, that he could not help exclaiming, “ O glorious sovereignty ! O glorious sovereignty ! ” He retired a small distance into the woods, that he might be more at liberty to contemplate the character of God, and adore and extol his holy and amiable sovereignty ; but he here saw so much of God that his mind was almost lost in the overwhelming manifestation. The scene was altogether new. There was a wonderful change either in God or in him.

Every thing was gilded with light and glory ; and ever and anon, as he gazed at the splendor and majesty of the divine character, he would still exclaim, “ O glorious sovereignty ! ” His mind was so constantly occupied in viewing the perfections of God, and in meditating on his word and works, that for weeks he hardly thought of himself, or made the inquiry whether he was converted or not.

From this time Mr. Mills entered, with the greatest earnestness, upon the work of his new spiritual life. At Williams College and at the Theological Seminary, he aroused a spirit among his fellow-students which led to the formation of the American Board of Foreign Missions. He matured the plans which resulted in the establishment of the United Foreign Missionary Society and of the American Bible Society. He did more than any other man to promote, in its early stages, the cause of Home Missions. And it was while he was returning from a mission of mercy to the western coast of Africa, that he was taken sick on shipboard, and was

buried in the sea. The beginning of all the good which he accomplished on earth, and of the glory which he now possesses in heaven, may be traced to that interesting morning when he first bowed to the sovereignty of God.

DR. CORNELIUS.

It is scarcely necessary to say any thing respecting the early life and character of the late Dr. Elias Cornelius. He was born at Somers, N.Y., in 1794, and entered Yale College in 1810. "During most of his college life," says a fellow-student, "he was certainly a very thoughtless young man. Of prepossessing personal appearance, of a generous, frank, and sociable disposition, fond of company and amusement, his society was coveted by the inconsiderate and irreligious portion of the students. Among them he was a leader, though not addicted, so far as I know, to vicious practices." Upon his return to college, at the close of the winter vacation of his senior year, he appeared

thoughtful and solemn. Says another college friend, “ He early disclosed to me the state of his mind. There was something about him which excited the most lively interest in his case. His convictions were unusually deep and painful. Of the character of God, as a holy, righteous sovereign; of the purity of his law, and of the extent of his requirements; of the entire depravity of his own heart, and of the sinfulness of his past life,— he had very clear perceptions; of the truth of the declaration, ‘The carnal mind is enmity against God,’ he had most distressing proof in his own experience. He saw that he was in the hands of God, who was reasonable in his demands, and would be just in condemning the sinner. But his heart rose, at times, in fearful rebellion against his Maker. Like the bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, he struggled, and seemed determined not to submit; and I trembled lest the Spirit, thus resisted, would be grieved away. His anguish of soul was almost insupportable.”

In the month of March, about six or seven weeks after the commencement of his religious impressions, he found peace in submission to God. "One day," remarks a fellow-student, "he knocked at my door. On opening it, his countenance told me that the contest was over. The storm had passed away; and it was the clear shining after rain.

"He requested me to walk with him. We were silent until we had proceeded some distance from college. My own emotions were such that I had no disposition to speak. He was musing; and the fire burned. When we had come to a retired place, unable longer to restrain his feelings, he raised his hands, and exclaimed, 'O sweet submission, sweet submission!' This exclamation he repeated many times during our walk. That he was in the hands of God was his theme, and the rejoicing of his heart. He expressed no hope of pardon, and appeared not to think of himself. The glorious Being, to whose character, law, and government he had felt so much opposition, seemed to occupy the

whole field of vision, and to fill his soul with inexpressible delight."

Here clearly was a case in which the first exercises in conversion were those of submission to God. "Very soon he began to speak of the plan of salvation through the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God. It was unfolded to him in its glory, and excited his most grateful admiration. He saw how God could be just, and justify him that believeth in Jesus. Pressed with a sense of obligation to redeeming grace, his fervent aspiration seemed to be 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' The love of Christ, shed abroad in his heart, immediately manifested itself in vigorous, self-denying efforts for the conversion of his fellow-men." At once, a great revival commenced in college, in which Cornelius was intensely active.

After he began to preach, we find him now a missionary among the South-western Indians; then laboring, with his friend Larned, at New Orleans; then for several years pastor of the Tabernacle Church in

Salem; then secretary and agent of the American Education Society; and, finally, secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Under the burthen of these successive and crushing responsibilities, his health failed him; and he died, universally lamented, at the early age of thirty-eight.

REV. SYLVESTER LARNED.

The cases of Dr. Cornelius and Mr. Larned, we place together, because they were very like each other in personal appearance and natural temperament: they were both awakened and converted in college; and the form of conversion in both cases was the same,—*submission to a sovereign God*. And they graduated the same year. They were alike distinguished for their oratorical powers, and in after life were very special friends.

Mr. Larned was born in Pittsfield, Mass., in 1796, and graduated at Middlebury College in 1813. He was awakened, while in

college, by the death of a young friend, who was cut off suddenly, without leaving any evidence of a preparedness for heaven. Mr. Larned was led very solemnly to consider what would be his own situation, were he summoned, in like manner, into the presence of his God. Death appeared to him very terrible. His sins were set in order before him. The law of God condemned him ; and what could he do ? At times he was almost frantic with despair. His opposition to God was so great, that he once said to a religious friend, “ I feel that, if I could with this arm reach up, and pluck the Almighty from his throne, I should do it.”

“ After passing some hours, one day, in his room alone,” says a fellow-student, “ he left it, and went hastily into the woods. I sat by the window, and waited to see him return ; and, as he came, I saw that the look of despair was exchanged for a smile. Coming in, he exclaimed, ‘ O Charles ! I went into the woods to kill myself ; for I could not endure

such dreadful despair. But, when I arrived there, I thought I would first make one more prayer. I knelt down, though I feared that the trees would fall and crush me; and, before I rose, I found such joy and peace as cannot be described.'"

Soon after this, he gave some account of his experience in a religious meeting; in which he said, "How easy and delightful it is to possess religion, when once you submit to God! It is as easy as it is to breathe. I have no fears now, as to my future state. I do not think I should be afraid to die, should I be struck with lightning the next moment."

After closing his professional studies at Princeton, he made an arrangement with his friend Cornelius to meet him in New Orleans, with a view to a permanent settlement in that city, should Providence open the way. Accordingly, he arrived there in January, 1818; and here he remained until his death. He died suddenly of yellow fever,

on his birthday, at the age of twenty-four. Probably no preacher in the United States occupied a more important station, or was more admired for a brilliant natural eloquence.

SECTION XI.

MISCELLANEOUS INSTANCES, ILLUSTRATING THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF CONVERSION.

THE cases described in this section, although anonymous, are all of them taken from real life. They have been selected from hundreds of well-attested instances, which from time to time have been published.

1. W. H., Esq., was among the early settlers of a town in the western part of Vermont. He was soon elevated to a post of responsibility, in which he gave evidence of fearlessness and integrity in the discharge of official duties. He was never a scoffer at religion, but was far enough from possessing the meek, forgiving spirit of Christ.

In the year 1816, when he was a little more than fifty years old, there was a revival

of religion in the town ; and he was among the first to come forward and speak of the importance of becoming reconciled to God. He soon expressed a hope in Christ, but was induced, after a time, to relinquish it, under the impression that it was superficial, and had no good foundation. God now opened his eyes to see himself as he had never done before. His sins rose up like mountains before him, and seemed to cry aloud for vengeance. He came into a conference meeting with a countenance betokening the deepest anguish, and exclaimed, in tones that pierced the heart of every hearer, “I am lost ! You can do nothing for me ! But I entreat of you to take care of yourselves ! I am lost !” He continued in this state about three weeks ; when, to use his own language, “My case was as though the noonday had burst upon the gloom of midnight. I was filled with light and joy and love to the character, law, and salvation of God. Instantly I found myself with both hands extended towards heaven, exclaiming, ‘Glory to God

in the highest! Glory be to God in the highest!' ”

From this time, Esquire H. was a new man. He was for ten years a deacon in the church, and was an example to all believers “in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”

2. Instances of conversion which begin in *penitence* are either not so common as the other forms, or (what is more likely) they are less frequently recorded. We find them, however, occasionally; and the following instance may be taken as a specimen:—

During a season of revival, Mrs. M. was resolutely opposed to the work, and treated it with levity and contempt. Still, she could not utterly shut out the Spirit from her house or her heart. She was herself awakened, and fell under the most pungent convictions of guilt. “I have been,” she said, “the most ignorant and stupid being that ever lived. The one thing needful,— the care of my soul,— I have altogether neglected. I have been forgetful of God; and

the solemn realities of eternity I have banished from my mind. Thus have I been living all my days. O my heart! my hard and sinful heart! It is full of every kind of pollution. Never was there so great a sinner."

In this state of mind she continued for a considerable time. At length, she became more calm and tranquil, but expressed no hope that she had passed from death unto life. Upon being inquired of as to her views and exercises, she said, "I appear to myself to be the most vile and loathsome of the human race. Nothing in the universe seems to me so deformed and odious as my sinful heart. *I do loathe and abhor myself for sin.* But, as much as I see of the vileness of my heart, I know that God sees a thousand times more than I do. All its lurking wickedness is fully exposed to his view. And yet I would hide nothing from him. Sin is so abominable and loathsome in itself, it is reasonable and right that God should hold it in the greatest abhorrence. It is right that God should hate and abhor my wicked char-

acter and my wicked self, as one of the vilest of sinners. I know that God must oppose me, and set his face against me; and nothing can be more reasonable than this. I do not wish it were otherwise. How can I desire that the all-holy God should approve and love such a miserable, loathsome sinner as myself? God requires me to hate every evil and false way; to love him with all my heart and soul: and this requirement I know is reasonable. I do not wish it abated or altered, although I know that I am continually exposing myself to everlasting destruction for my disobedience. The divine law condemns me, and justly condemns me; and, should everlasting destruction be my portion, God's throne would be guiltless, and my mouth would be stopped! Oh, the dreadful end of the ungodly! And I know not but that end will be mine. I am in God's hand; and he will do with me as seemeth him good. His counsel shall stand; and he will do all his pleasure. It is my duty to say, amen; and *I think I can say so.* The Judge of all the

earth will do right ; therefore, *let his will be done.*"

This woman was now, evidently, a converted person, though she did not know it. She saw the odiousness of sin. She loathed and abhorred herself on account of it. She had ceased to quarrel with God. She took his part against herself. She felt that she was in God's hands, and was willing that he should do with her as seemed to him good. She must have been a child of God, though she had no view, as yet, of his pardoning love in Christ, and entertained no hope of heaven.

3. In the following case of conversion, the first holy affection seems to have been *submission to God*. Mr. B. was about thirty-five years of age, and distinguished for good sense and judgment. He at first opposed a revival, which was prevailing in his native town, and quarrelled with some of the doctrines of the gospel. At a religious meeting in his house, he appeared indifferent at first ; but, before the meeting closed, he was im-

pressed, and came to the resolution to lead a better life. He continued to attend meetings ; and his convictions increased. At length, they became so pungent as to unfit him for labor and deprive him of sleep. A sense of the all-seeing and all-powerful God, against whom he had sinned, and who, he knew, must be angry with him, made him tremble. He resorted to meetings, and conversed with his minister, but found no relief. His deceitful heart would flee to any thing but to God, through Christ, for help. About the dawn of day, after a wretched and sleepless night, he had some new views as to the propriety of submitting unconditionally to God. He saw that it was a thing most suitable and excellent that God should reign and do all his pleasure. His obstinacy now gave way. He thought that he would acquiesce in the divine sovereignty, and found relief ; still, he did not think himself converted, nor did he indulge any hope of heaven.

In the course of the day, his darkness and

distress returned, and were more intolerable than ever. "Oh, what a Saviour I have rejected! Eternal death is now my portion, and I cannot open my lips to complain." With reflections such as these, he walked backwards and forwards, wringing his hands in agony, and saying, "Now is my doom fixed and settled for eternity." At this point, a voice seemed to come to him, "Have I not done enough for you? And have you not stood out against me long enough?" "Instantly my spirit answered, 'Yes, Lord, oh, yes, I bow to thee! I resign myself to thy disposal. Oh, take me, and make me what thou wilt!'"

This act of submission was succeeded by a peace which he had never felt before, and of which he had no conception. He at once set up the worship of God in his family, and entered upon the duties of a Christian life. His perseverance proved that his hope was not a delusion.

4. In the conversions which follow, the change evidently commenced in *faith*:—

There was a young lady in New York,

whose name was Mary —. She was awakened, somewhat convicted, and attended the inquiry meeting from week to week. She would assent to all that was said to her; but did not seem to feel very deeply, and she made no progress. Her pastor frequently called upon her, and used all methods to bring her to a decision; but in vain. One day he told her, at the close of an interview: “Mary, I can do you no good. I have said to you every thing that I can think of that is appropriate to your case, and nothing seems to move you. I can do no more for you.” The thought that her pastor had pretty much despaired of her, and was about to give her up, alarmed her. She felt more than ever the need of looking to some other source for help. She went the same evening to a religious meeting, where the service was commenced with singing a hymn of Watts, in which is the following verse: —

“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall:
Be thou my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all.”

The whole hymn, and especially these words, affected her so deeply, that she thought of nothing else. They gave her the first idea of faith. She went to her pastor the next day, and said, “When you was reading that hymn last night, I saw the whole way of salvation for sinners perfectly plain, and wondered that I had never seen it before. I saw that I had nothing to do but to *trust in Christ*. I sat all the evening looking at that hymn: I did not hear your prayer; I did not hear any thing you said; I thought of nothing but the hymn. I have been thinking of it ever since. The way of life seems so plain and light, that it makes me happy:—

‘A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall.’”

5. Mr. W. was exceedingly distressed because his wife proposed making a public profession of religion. She chose what she thought the most favorable moment for disclosing her wishes to him; and asked his consent that she might offer herself as a can-

dicate for Church privileges. The conflict in his breast was such as to forbid any reply. He left her in suspense, and went immediately out. He afterwards seemed absorbed in the deepest contemplation, without communicating to any one the burden which was upon him. At the time appointed, he carried his wife to the church-meeting, and returned for her at the close. On the following Sabbath, she was propounded to the church. Mr. W. was exceedingly unhappy. His burthen seemed almost insupportable. He found no rest, in the house or in the field, by day or by night. He felt himself to be a guilty, wretched man, without help or hope, but in the sovereign mercy of that Being against whom he had offended. On the bright Sabbath morning when she was to give herself to the Lord and his people in an everlasting covenant, he arose very early, after a night of almost insupportable distress. He retired to his barn to pray; and there Christ was made known to him as a suitable, precious, and all-sufficient Saviour. He embraced him with

his whole heart, and rejoiced to give himself up entirely to him. The day to which he had looked forward, with such anguish of spirit, was turned into one of inexpressible gladness. He rejoiced to see his wife make an open profession of her faith, and only regretted that he could not accompany her in the solemn transaction. On the next sacramental occasion, he was received to communion with her.

6. Mr. K. had been for many years an infidel. He hated the Bible, abhorred the name of Jesus, and sternly rejected the claims of the gospel. His fears were aroused by a dangerous sickness; and his feelings were somewhat softened by the kind attentions of Christian friends. He consented to read some of the books which they gave him; and the thought struck him with great force, "There must be something in this religion." He was a long time fighting his way against infidel objections and doubts, but at length came to the resolution, that he would do nothing else until he had satisfied himself of the truth of Christianity, and had complied with

its requisitions. This, he supposed, might take him about three days ; but, at the end of that time, he had learned only his own weakness and helplessness, and his exposure to the wrath of an offended God.' He now began, for the first time, to pray, and even consented to attend a prayer-meeting. "The Christians whom I saw there," says he, "I regarded as the happiest of human beings, while I was myself the most miserable. I saw that I had no moral fitness for heaven, and knew not how I could be happy if admitted there. I saw the justice of God in consigning me to hell, and knew not how he could be just, and save me. I regarded myself as irretrievably lost, and given over to despair and ruin ; but, when every other expedient failed, my thoughts turned to that Jesus whom I had despised and rejected : and the question arose, 'Will he yet save me if I put my trust in him ? He saved the dying thief on the cross : will he, can he, save me ?' I resolved at once to venture upon him ; and I carried my resolution into effect. I came, in faith, to the foot

of the cross, and heartily and forever committed myself to his hands. Immediately I felt relief; and the peace of God took possession of my soul. I was astonished to find how sweet the name of Jesus was to me,—that name which formerly had been my loathing and abhorrence. There seemed a perfect heaven in the name of Jesus; and I wanted to think of nothing else. I loved to pray to God in the name of Christ, and deemed it my highest honor and privilege to be called a Christian. I soon became satisfied that God had brought me out of darkness into his marvellous light, and made me a subject of renewing grace; and the experience of twenty years has but served to confirm me in this assurance.”

7. In the town of M——, in the State of New York, lives a Mr. B., who was once a boisterous champion for the doctrine of universal salvation; but being seized with a violent disease, and brought apparently near to the realities of eternity, he experienced some painful misgivings. With regard to his

favorite doctrine, the inquiry forced itself upon him, "Will it bear the test?" It seemed to him as though all the interests of eternity were concentrated on this inquiry, "Will it bear the test?" But the suspense involved in this momentous inquiry was short. Conscience awoke, and the awful delusion fled. The wailing of the pit seemed too near and too well deserved to be scoffed at. A conviction of his own vileness and guilt swept away the whole array of proofs which he had industriously collected in favor of Universalism. In anguish of spirit, he exclaimed, "I am undone! I am about to die; and an eternal hell must be my portion!"

His former associates said to him, "Don't be frightened: God is merciful, and can't do wrong."—"I know it," he replied. "And that is what troubles me. His mercy I have abused, and deserve nothing but wrath. No: God cannot do wrong. He will not do *so* wrong as to let me escape. I see no way in which I can be saved."

In this state of mind, he remained two

weeks. At length he began to think of the *atonement*,—an atonement wrought out by Christ for the chief of sinners. A gleam of hope that possibly God might yet forgive him through the atonement entered his mind. He fastened upon it with all the energy of a sinking soul. He threw himself at once at the foot of the cross, resolving, if he perished, to perish there; and soon his troubled spirit found rest: he rejoiced greatly, believing with all his heart. From that time he began to recover, and has ever since exhibited a faith and life in consistency with the doctrine of the cross.

SECTION XII.

REMARKS ON THE PRECEDING NARRATIVES.

THE cases of conversion above described have been selected from different countries and periods, and from persons of different ages and denominations, — the learned and the unlearned, the aged and the young, — with the design to show, not only the fact of this great and needed change, but that everywhere, and under all circumstances, it is substantially the same thing. The necessity for it lies in our very nature, — the fallen and corrupted nature of man ; and the renewal of that nature — the recovery of the lost and ruined soul to purity, peace, and a meetness for heaven — must be in all cases essentially the same. It is a turning from the broad to the narrow way, — a change in our

internal exercises and affections from those which are sinful to those which are holy. The form of the first holy affection may vary ; and it will, according to the object in view of which it is put forth. It may be one of love or penitence or submission or faith. But whatever its form, if it be a holy affection, the change which it inaugurates is conversion ; and the subject of it becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus.

In all the conversions that have been described, we see that God works *by means*. It is sometimes said that God could, if he pleased, convert souls without means. But is this statement true ? Does God ever convert sinners without means ? Is it possible that he should ? Can he shed abroad his love in any heart, and yet nothing be loved ? Must there not be an object of love before the mind, and some reason or motive presented why it should be loved ? And so of repentance or faith, or any other holy affection. Persons cannot repent or believe in view of nothing, and when no motives are presented, or means

used, to enkindle and draw forth these holy affections. To convert a sinner without means would be, to our apprehension, something more than a miracle: it would be a natural impossibility.

The means which God employs for the awakening and conversion of sinners are, as we have seen in the cases above cited, various. In the case of Paul, a miracle was wrought for this purpose. In the case of Luther, a storm of thunder was made the means of arousing a stupid soul. Sometimes it is a fit of sickness, or the death of a friend, or (as in the case of Bunyan) the conversation and example of Christians. Most commonly, however, it is in the written or preached word of God,—the great and solemn truths of the gospel. Says Paul to the Corinthians, “I have begotten you *through the gospel.*” The gospel, when accompanied by the Spirit’s power, is as “the fire and the hammer to break the rock in pieces.” In ten thousand instances, it has proved itself to be “mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds.”

But, whatever means may be employed in bringing sinners to Christ, the grand efficient, in every case, is *the Spirit's power*, — a power exerted through the medium of our faculties, and in perfect consistency with those mental processes and laws which God has himself established. Hence, through the entire change, the subject of it feels no constraint put upon himself. He thinks his own thoughts, and exercises all his faculties with perfect freedom. It is *he* that feels and wills and acts. It is *he* that turns from his evil ways, and commences walking in those ways of wisdom which are pleasantness, and those paths which are peace.

In nearly all the cases which have been given, we see a *preparatory* work of the Spirit preceding the great and decisive change. Ordinarily, there is first an awakening, then conviction, and then conversion ; and, in most of the conversions which took place in this country years ago, we are struck with the *thoroughness* of the convictions which were experienced. The subjects gen-

erally were led to see and to acknowledge the entire *justice* of God in their condemnation: they saw that they *deserved* eternal punishment, and felt, that, if it were inflicted, they should have no reason to complain. Now, this is the proper measure of conviction. When persons are brought to this point, and not before, conviction has had its perfect work. It deserves consideration, whether this measure of conviction has been commonly reached in our own times, and whether this may not be the reason that conversions of late have not been more thorough and satisfactory.

It may be further remarked, that, in nearly all the conversions which have been described, the subjects of them could find no rest until they planted their feet on the ground of *Christ's atonement*. The first effort of the awakened sinner commonly is, to reform his life, to make himself better, to work out a righteousness in which to trust. But, if the work of the Spirit goes on, the sinner soon finds that all such efforts are vain:

he is “nothing better, but rather grows worse.” His conviction and distress increase upon him, until he is ready to despair; when he gets a view of Christ and his atonement, and finds peace and pardon there. Bunyan’s Pilgrim could not be rid of his burden, until it rolled off at the foot of the cross. Now, this shows us the *vital necessity* of the atonement, if we would have joy and peace in believing; and this remark is the more important at the present time, when great efforts are making, not merely by liberals and infidels, but by some who claim to be evangelical Christians, to frame a religion without an atonement, and thus take away our only foundation from us. Such a religion will not give the despairing sinner peace. Of such a gospel, we may well be afraid.

A part of the preparatory work of the Spirit in conversion may be called a *divine illumination*. Light is poured in upon the darkened soul of the sinner, enabling him to see the truth respecting God and himself, and divine things generally, as he never did

before. The first effect of this illumination is in awakening and conviction ; but, in the nearest approaches to conversion, it becomes clearer and stronger. Thus, in the conversion of Pres. Edwards, or immediately preceding it, he says, “ There came into my soul, and was, as it were, diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the Divine Being quite different from any thing I ever experienced before.” And so Brainerd says, “ As I was walking in a dark, thick grove, an unspeakable glory seemed to open to the view and apprehension of my soul. It was a new inward apprehension or view of God such as I never had before.” The light imparted at this stage of the process of change, as in the preceding stages, is not, however, to be regarded as a new revelation of truth : the truth existed before, and had been revealed before ; but the soul was not in a situation to appreciate it, and to feel its power. Eyes it had ; but they saw not. Faculties it had ; but they were engrossed with other things.

Perhaps in every case where the first holy affection is love to God, it is preceded, as with Edwards and Brainerd, by new and glorious views of God. These constitute the object of the new affection, and the motive by which it is awakened and drawn forth. And so the other forms of conversion are preceded by new and appropriate views. Thus where the first holy affection is repentance, there will be new views of the baseness and odiousness of sin. Where the first holy exercise is submission, there will be new views of the excellency of God's government, and of the reasonableness and propriety of its claims ; and, where the first holy exercise is faith, there will be, as in the case of Cowper, new views of Christ, and of the way of salvation. Still, there is nothing in conversion, either in its preparatory stages or in itself, which can be called miraculous. No law of mental operation is supervened or interrupted. The subject perceives and thinks and feels, and turns freely unto the Lord. He makes to himself a new heart and a new spirit, and

becomes an obedient subject of the kingdom of Christ.

I have presented, in the foregoing pages, many instances of conversion,—the most of them pertaining to some of the more eminent servants of God,—because I feel sure that the reading of them must be interesting and improving. We might infer as much as this from the fact, that, in the Book of Acts, the story of Paul's conversion is recorded no less than three times. In the reading of such narratives, we learn the true nature of conversion in the several forms which it assumes. We see the workings of the human mind and heart under the strivings of the Holy Spirit. We learn the reality and power of the religion of Christ. We see all this illustrated in actual experiment. The principal danger of such reading may be, perhaps, that we make the experience of others a standard for ourselves, feeling that our exercises must conform in every particular to theirs before we are entitled to hope in Christ. The Bible, we must remember, is our only rule; and we

must stand approved or condemned, according as we conform to that. An apostle has told us of some who, “measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”

SECTION XII.

HINDERANCES TO CONVERSION.

THE hinderances in the way of conversion — those which present themselves to the awakened sinner to keep him away from Christ — are numerous. We shall specify but a few.

1. One of the most prominent of these is *pride*; and this operates in several ways. Under the influence of pride, some persons cannot consent to the *humbling, abasing* conditions of the gospel. They cannot adopt the confession of the prodigal, “Father, we have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and are not worthy to be called thy children.” They cannot cry with the distressed publican, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” They wish to be saved, but cannot quite con-

sent to receive salvation as the free gift of God's grace. It would be more pleasant to them to reflect that they had saved themselves, or, at least, that they had done something towards it, than to be obliged to acknowledge that they had deserved nothing but destruction, and that their salvation was the mere gift of sovereign mercy.

Pride prevents others from embracing the gospel, on account of the *disgrace* which they suppose attached to it. "What would be thought and said of me if I should become a Christian? I should be the derision of my former associates and friends. They would laugh at me, and point at me the finger of scorn." Many, who have been the subjects of solemn impressions, and were almost persuaded to be Christians, have been stopped precisely here. "Religion, if I embrace it, will disgrace me; and therefore I put it from me."

Pride of *opinion*, too, is often an effectual hinderance in the way of conversion. Persons have long been known as the advocates

of some heretical opinion, some *ism*, which is palpably at variance with the gospel of Christ: they have argued for it; they have been identified with it; they have supported it, and suffered for it; and they feel as though they cannot give it up. And yet they are not quite satisfied with it. They fear it is a sandy foundation, and are half-inclined, at times, to abandon it, and plant their feet upon the rock of the gospel. “But this will be to renounce all my old opinions, to contradict my past professions, to pass a censure upon my whole course of life. And how can I do this? No: I am committed for weal or for woe; and, true or false, I must flounder on, as I have done, and meet the consequences.” There can be no doubt that many awakened persons have been kept out of the kingdom of Christ in the way here pointed out. Pride of opinion has shut the door against them, and they are excluded.

2. Inquiring souls very often fail of conversion through the strong and multiform influence of *the world*. The love of *wealth*

keeps many back from Christ. They think well of religion, and would be glad, on many accounts, to possess it: but they have made up their minds to be rich, have formed their plans accordingly; and they are sure that religion — strict, personal, heart religion — would break in upon their plans, and might defeat them altogether. Here is a man, we will suppose, who is pursuing wealth in some unlawful calling, as John Newton was when engaged in the slave-trade, or as thousands now are in the sale of intoxicating liquors. Or here is a man engaged in a lawful business; but, in order to increase his gains, he is pursuing it unlawfully,—he is pursuing it, it may be, in the practice of fraud, or in violation of the sabbath, or he is pursuing it so absorbingly as to leave him no time or heart for the duties of religion. Now, all of these different characters know, or may know, that their courses of life are wrong. They often *feel painfully* that they are wrong. They are not satisfied with them. Their own hearts condemn them; and God, they

know, “is greater than their heart, and knoweth all things.” They are almost persuaded, at times, to forsake their present courses, make peace with their consciences, and press into the kingdom of Christ; but their worldly interests are all pulling the other way. If they become Christians, it must be at a great sacrifice; and they cannot make it. They love the treasures of earth, and *will have them*, even though the riches of heaven are forfeited.

Others are kept back from conversion by the claims of worldly *ambition*. Popularity, promotion, to climb the steeps of worldly honor and power, this is the ruling passion of their souls. They believe religion is a reality; they believe it is important, and important for *them*; they feel their need of it, especially under trials, and are almost persuaded, at times, to embrace it. “But, if I renounce the world, the world will renounce me. If I become a Christian, my prospects of worldly honor and promotion are defeated; and I cannot make the sacrifice. Those who

choose the honor which cometh from God may have it: my heart is set upon that honor which cometh from man."

Many persons, when pressed on the subject of religion, are kept from it by their love of sinful *pleasures*. This is frequently the case with the young. They are attached to the pleasures and amusements of the world: their hearts are set upon them; and they cannot give them up, as they feel that they should be constrained to do, were they to become Christians.

Worldly *connections* and *associates* often have influence with young inquirers, and increase the difficulty of their conversion. They could consent to go to Christ if their companions would go with them; but to come out, and be separate, and stand up for God alone, involves a cross which they have no strength to bear. They conclude, therefore, in opposition to their better judgment,—in opposition to the voice of reason, of conscience, and of God,—they conclude to follow a multitude to do evil, and risk the

consequences. To please their companions in sin, they consent to throw away their souls.

3. Conversion is often delayed, if not finally prevented, by *mistaken views as to the nature of it*. Persons are looking and waiting for some kind of change which they have no reason to expect, and which, if experienced, would do them no good, while they put off that vital spiritual transformation without which they cannot enter heaven. I once heard two educated men, professional men, who were past the middle of life, and had been brought up under the gospel, relate their religious experience. Both hoped that they had been recently converted; and they gave as a reason why they had neglected religion so long, that they had entirely misapprehended the nature of conversion. One said that he had always supposed conversion to be something like a shock of electricity,—something that would dart through a man like lightning, and be as palpable to the sense, and leave no uncertainty afterwards whether he was con-

verted or not. The other was less explicit in his statement. At any rate, he had always considered conversion as a thing entirely beyond his power, and in regard to which he had no responsibility. He believed that there was such a change, that it was an important one ; and he had long been hoping that he might, at some time, experience it. But it did not come ; and he felt under no particular obligation in regard to it. Now, it is to be feared that the views here expressed are pretty common among the impenitent. And they account for the fact that so many of this class are not sooner awakened,— that they can hear the gospel from year to year, and still remain indifferent and unconverted.

4. The conversion of awakened, convicted sinners is often delayed, if not prevented, by the uninscriptural advice of religious friends. This point may be illustrated by examples. An excellent minister, now deceased, describes the following case : “A young woman of my congregation, of a yielding, amiable disposition, became alarmed at her

situation, and set herself to seek the Lord. I visited her, and conversed with her repeatedly. Her seriousness became more and more deep. I left her one day with a strong expectation, that, the next time I should see her, she would be at peace with God. The next time I saw her, her appearance was changed. Her anxieties were evidently diminished. She met me with a smile that surprised and pained me. I said, ‘Have you given your heart to Christ, Mary?’ ‘Oh, no! not yet,’ she replied; ‘but I do not feel so bad as I did.’ — ‘Why not?’ said I: ‘what reason have you to feel any better?’ — ‘I don’t know as you will think I have any reason; but I hope I shall be a Christian by and by. I don’t feel in so much haste as I did; and the sinfulness of my heart does not trouble me so much.’ — ‘My dear Mary,’ said I, with astonishment and pain, ‘how is this? I expected different things. Evidently your seriousness is diminished. You care less for your salvation than you did. What has altered your feelings since I saw you?’ —

‘Why, when you left me the last time, and told me to repent that very day, I was dreadfully troubled. I felt that my heart was opposed to God ; and I was afraid to think of living without Christ another hour. Your last words, *to-day, to-day*, kept ringing in my ears : I could not get rid of them. But, pretty soon, Miss S. came in ; and I told her how I felt. But she told me not to be discouraged ; only keep on seeking the Lord. She said I was doing well ; and, if I persevered, I should soon get religion.’ — ‘And you believed her, did you ?’ — ‘Yes, I believed her ; and I have felt better ever since.’ — ‘Felt better, Mary ? Why, she told you an untruth ; and you are miserably deceived ! How can you feel better, while you are rejecting Christ, and exposed every moment to perish forever ? ’

“I did my best to arouse her ; but it was all in vain. Her anxieties departed : she ceased to pray ; and, in a few days, she was as careless and worldly as ever.”

A similar case, though not terminating so

painfully, once fell under my own observation. In a revival of religion in the town of C—, several young ladies of about the same age were awakened, and attended the inquiry-meeting together. In a short time, they were all hopefully converted, save one. This one appeared as well as either of them at first; and I confidently expected to find her soon rejoicing in hope. But, to my surprise, she seemed to make no progress. Her anxieties became no greater: her convictions no deeper, but rather the reverse. I became alarmed for her, and sought a private interview. I learned that she slept with a pious aunt, a member of the church, who used to talk with her when in bed. Her aunt told her that she must not be so distressed about herself; that she was doing well: the spirit was striving with her, and that she did not doubt that she would be soon converted. “Now, aunt’s conversation,” said the young lady, “always comforts me; but, somehow or other, yours distresses me.”

I gave the young lady the best advice I

could, and lost no opportunity of seeing her aunt. I told her what her niece had said. "And now," said I, "if you do not wish to ruin your niece forever, you must stop talking to her after this manner. The Holy Spirit is striving with her, to bring her to an immediate submission and repentance. The Spirit is ringing in her ears, 'Behold, *now* is the accepted time! behold, *now* is the day of salvation!' But you are encouraging her to put the matter off. 'Don't be discouraged: you will soon feel better. The Spirit is striving; and you must wait God's time.'"

The course which I took in the case was successful. The aunt learned a lesson which she had not known before; and the niece was soon rejoicing in a Saviour's love.

5. Conversions are often hindered by an unwillingness on the part of the subject to renounce some darling sin, or to perform some acknowledged Christian duty. How often, for example, are awakened persons kept out of the kingdom of Christ, because they cannot consent to pray in their families; or to go

to a neighbor whom they have injured, and ask his forgiveness ; or to attend an inquiry-meeting, and let their feelings be known !

There is, in the case of almost every person, a sin which most easily besets him, and which will be the most likely to work his ruin. It is that to which he is most strongly tempted ; that into which he most frequently falls ; that which is likely to live longest, and die last, in his soul. Many persons, when awakened and impressed, find this particular sin too strong for them. They can give up scores of other things ; but the right hand they cannot consent to cut off, the right eye they cannot pluck out. The chain of the destroyer is so closely fastened upon them, at this point, that they cannot break it ; and it drags them downward to perdition.

A young lady of my acquaintance had been for some time anxious, but made no progress, and seemed likely to relapse into a state of indifference. In conversation with her one evening, I asked her whether there was not some sin which she had not re-

nounced, and was not willing to renounce ; whether she was really willing to give up all for Christ. I urged her to press this inquiry upon her conscience and heart, and learn the result. The next morning, she came to me with a radiant countenance, and told me that the controversy was all over. “I have been a great lover,” said she, “as you know, of fashionable amusements. I have hoped that they might, somehow, be reconciled with a life of religion ; at any rate, I was not willing to give them up. But the controversy is over now : the last cord that bound me down to sin and the world is severed ; and my soul is at liberty. The snare of the fowler is broken ; and I am escaped.” From that day she became a happy Christian, and still lives rejoicing in the Lord.

6. Many persons, when the necessity of conversion is urged upon them, are kept back by a *procrastinating spirit*. They cannot think of finally rejecting religion,— of putting it from them, to be thought of no more. But they are easily persuaded to delay it for

a season. They see no particular reason for haste. They flatter themselves that they have a good while to live. God is merciful, and will grant them further opportunities. Others, they know, have delayed too long; but this, they are resolved, shall not be the case with them. Others have broken their promises of future amendment; but they intend to keep theirs: and so they flatter and quiet themselves in sin. They ease, for the time, their troubled consciences, and in most cases ease them finally and forever. Very few who settle down on this foundation ever awake from it on earth. They continue to flatter and promise and delay till the limit of mercy is passed, and they are gone forever.

7. I mention but another hinderance in the way of conversion, and this is the indulgence of an *unfounded* hope; and this, it may be feared, is no uncommon case. The subject of it is deceived respecting himself. He thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing. He has a name to live when he is dead. The grounds of a fallacious hope are

many, — too many to be specified here. Yet when a person has settled down upon any one of them, and feels secure, he is in a situation where the arrows of truth will not be likely to affect him, where the sword of the Spirit will scarcely come. The delusion, it may be feared, will continue until life and hope are gone.

SECTION XIII.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONVERSION.

HAVING explained the nature of conversion, and illustrated it by examples taken from real life, it remains that we urge some considerations, setting forth its high importance. With God's blessing, we hope to induce every impenitent reader to attend to the subject without delay.

1. My first argument for the importance of the change in question will be drawn from its *reasonableness*. It is a perfectly reasonable change. It is so in all the forms which it ever assumes. Conversion sometimes commences in the *love of God*; and is not this reasonable? What can be more reasonable than to love a Being who *is* infinitely lovely, whose character combines in perfection ev-

ery amiable and attractive quality? We are also to regard God as our greatest, kindest *benefactor*; and shall we not love him for what he has done for us? Shall we not return to him the grateful affections of our souls?

Conversion is often the beginning of *repentance*, — of holy, godly sorrow for sin. And what can be more reasonable than sorrow for a fault? The merest child knows, when he has done wrong, that he ought to be sorry for it. If a neighbor has injuriously treated any of us, we think that he ought to be sorry, and to make all the reparation in his power; and we think right. Now, every sin is injuriously treating the Supreme Being. It is a fault committed directly against God; and no words can make it plainer than it is on the bare mention of it, that godly sorrow for sin — that sorrow which worketh repentance unto life — is perfectly reasonable.

I have said that conversion is often the beginning of holy *submission to God*. And is not this a reasonable duty? God certainly

has a right to rule and reign over us. He made us from nothing. He is the Author and Bestower of all our blessings. We are absolutely *his*; and he has a right to give us laws, and to dispose of us according to his pleasure. And for us to refuse submission is to resist, at every step, what is reasonable and right. We are to reflect, too, that the government of God is not only rightful and legitimate, but it is infinitely *wise* and *good*. The ends at which it aims are the noblest possible; and the means by which it proposes to secure these ends are the best that can be conceived. It is the height of wickedness, therefore, to resist such a government. It is the perfection of reason to submit to it, and rejoice in it.

Conversion, in many cases, is the beginning of *faith*, — true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and, in this view, it is perfectly reasonable. What are the facts in the case? Here is the sinner, oppressed with guilt, condemned by the law, with no means of help or deliverance in his power, and with nothing in prospect but “indignation and wrath, tribulation and

anguish," and that forever. And here is the great Saviour, with extended arms, able to save him, willing to save him, inviting him to come and receive salvation as the gift of his love. And now is it not reasonable that the sinner should listen and comply? Is it not of all things most reasonable that he should come to Christ, and embrace him, as the wretched Cowper did, and rejoice in the fulness, of his salvation?

In every view that can be taken of the subject, we see that the conversion of the heart from sin and Satan unto God is a most reasonable service. I urge it, because it is a reasonable service. It is one, I know, which reason and conscience, not less than the Word of God, demand.

2. I urge, secondly, in favor of conversion, that it is followed by the best *present results*. It saves from much misery, and confers much happiness, in the present life. Let us consider, briefly, some of those prolific sources of unhappiness which are wide open to us while living in sin, and from which nothing but conversion can deliver us.

One of these is the stings and reproaches of *conscience*. Every sinner has a conscience, which, however seared and stifled, will, at times, reproach and distress him. It will tell him of neglected duties and violated obligations, of mercies abused and guilt incurred. It will summon him, at times, to a solemn reckoning, and warn him of the awful retribution that awaits him. The mental agonies which are endured from the stings and reproaches of conscience are often very great: they are enough to imbitter the whole cup of life. And there is no way in which these miseries can be assuaged but by conversion. Let the sinner turn from his evil ways, and enter on the possession and practice of holiness, and that same conscience which before was a terror and a trouble to him will be henceforth his most complacent associate: it will whisper peace to his pained heart, and bless him with its approving smiles.

Another source of unhappiness to the sinner, while living in indulged sin, grows out of that *war with himself*, that *inward*

struggle and conflict, to which he is perpetually subject. This is a conflict between the different parts of his own moral nature, which the practice of sin has set at variance, and which nothing but conversion can ever harmonize. In his present state, reason dictates one thing to the sinner, and he pursues another. Conscience points him in one direction, and he follows another. His better judgment whispers, “This is the way: walk ye in it;” but his rebellious heart refuses to obey. And in this interminable conflict between reason and inclination, conscience and will, the better judgment and an unyielding heart, his soul is continually disturbed and agitated: it is rendered “like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” When the sinner turns from his evil ways, and never before, this war in the bosom ceases. In the moment of conversion, the heart yields, the will bows, and the nobler principles of the soul become predominant. Thenceforward, and never before, are they listened to and obeyed.

Still another source of unhappiness to the sinner consists in a continual and painful sense of *unpreparedness* to meet God in his providential dispensations. Much as the sinner is unreconciled to God, he knows that he is in his sovereign hands, to do with him as he pleases. He can kill him, or spare him alive, prosper or afflict him, as seemeth good in his sight. He knows, too, that the providences of God are inscrutable. Between himself and the entire future, there hangs up a dark and impenetrable curtain, so that he cannot tell what a day or an hour may bring forth. He is in health to-day; but he may be sick to-morrow. He is in prosperity to-day; but he may be in deep affliction to-morrow. He is alive on the earth to-day; but to-morrow he may be dead, and in the world of despair. He is completely in the hands of God; and, in what manner God is intending to dispose of him, he cannot tell: and when he thinks of this subject, as think he must at times, he is disquieted. He feels alarmed: he knows he is not ready to meet God in his providences,

— especially those distressing, crushing providences, which may be very near to overwhelm him. Now, there is no way in which this source of unhappiness can ever be dried up but by conversion. When the sinner turns from his sins, and enters into the service of Christ, he is prepared for any thing. Nothing can now injure him. Come prosperity or adversity, sickness or health, life or death, he is prepared to meet it. He is in the number of those now to whom all things work together for good.

I shall mention but another source of unhappiness to the sinner, while living in a course of sin; and this is a constant feeling of *exposure* to the merited wrath and indignation of Heaven. He knows that that God at whose mercy he lies, and on whose bounty he lives, is angry with him. He knows that he *must* be angry with him. He sees the rod of his anger extended over him, ready to inflict the merited vengeance; and he trembles at his dread exposure. He feels as an aged sinner once told me that he had felt

habitually, for forty years,—as though a drawn dagger was all the while pointed at his heart. Now, with such a feeling, it matters little what our worldly circumstances may be. We may be as rich as Crœsus, and may have ever so much of the honors and pleasures of the world, this feeling of *exposure* to the merited wrath of God is alone sufficient to spoil it all.

Some of my readers will recollect a story, which was in our school-books when we were children, of the tyrant of Sicily and his flatterer. The flatterer undertook to persuade Dionysius that he was the happiest man in the world. “ You have riches, honors, and pleasures in abundance, every thing that your heart can desire; and you are the happiest man in the world.” — “ Well, flatterer,” said Dionysius, “ have you a mind to try it?” — “ Why, yes! I should like to try it very much.” So the king ordered a splendid banquet to be prepared for him. The tables were loaded with all the dainties of the East; the flatterer was seated down to them in

great state ; and, for a moment, he thought himself happy. But, just as he was beginning to taste of the feast, he chanced to cast his eye upward, when he saw a glittering sword, suspended by a single hair, hanging directly over his head. Immediately the cup of pleasure was dashed from his lips ; his fancied enjoyments were all spoiled. He begged the king to remove him in a moment from a situation so appalling and so dreadful. Now, this fitly illustrates the case of the sinner, under the government of God. Whatever his worldly circumstances may be, there hangs suspended over him, by a single hair, the glittering sword of divine wrath. It may fall at any time. It *must* fall in a very little time, and pierce him to the soul. So far as his eyes are open to see any thing of a spiritual nature, he must see his awful danger : he must fear and tremble in view of it ; and there is no way in which he can quiet his fears, and escape from this state of awful exposure, but by conversion. Let him turn from his sins, and submit to God ; and the

flaming sword is at once sheathed : it is taken out of the way. And, so far from trembling in prospect of the coming wrath, he rejoices in the Saviour's love.

I know that the present life is short, and that the concerns of it are all trifles compared with the weightier concerns of eternity ; and yet it is of some importance for us to be happy here, — to be happy, not in the feverish pleasures of sin, but on *solid, enduring principles*. And sure I am, that there is no such happiness for any creature in the practice of wickedness. It is only by turning from sin, or by *conversion*, that we have it in our power to secure substantial enjoyments in the present world.

3. Conversion is important, thirdly, as it is the only way in which to secure the *approbation* and *favor* of the Supreme Being ; and this is a consideration, however trifling it may appear to some, of very great moment. Suppose that, by some act of ours, we could secure the approbation of all the inhabitants of this great *nation*, or even of the *world*.

By a single act, we could draw to ourselves the eyes of the whole world, and could secure the favor of all its inhabitants, so that our names should dwell on every heart, and our praises be sounded by every tongue. Or, to extend our views still further, suppose that, by this one act, we could make ourselves known, and most favorably known, to the entire *universe* of created beings,—we could attract the notice of angels, as well as of men, and cause all creatures to cast upon us a look of favor and a smile of love,—should we not think such an act worth performing? Would not the *motives*, the *inducements*, to it be exceedingly powerful?

But what, I ask, is the favor of the united world, or of the created universe, compared with the favor and the approbation of God? We see, at once, that it would be as nothing. The favor of the world would be, at best, but mere breath,—changing, fluctuating, as the wind that blows; but the favor of God is as unchanging as his throne. The favor of the world must soon pass away, and be forgotten;

but the favor of God will endure forever. The immutable, everlasting favor of God, which is represented in the Scriptures as life, and as even better than life, can be secured by *conversion*, and in no other way. While we persist in our sins, we cannot enjoy it; but, when we penitently turn from them, it is freely, gratuitously bestowed.

4. I urge, fourthly, the importance of conversion, from the consideration that it saves from *eternal death*. So it is represented in the Scriptures, “Turn ye! turn ye from your evil ways! for why will ye die?” The death here spoken of cannot be *temporal dissolution*, because conversion does not save from that: converted persons die *temporally*, as well as others. The death intended is doubtless *eternal death*,—that death which is set forth in other Scriptures as the proper wages and desert of sin. The future punishment of the wicked is set before us in the Bible by a variety of terrific and awful figures; but I know of no figurative representation of it more appalling than that of

eternal death. Did you ever, dear reader, stand by the bedside of a dying fellow-creature? Did you witness, hour after hour, his dissolving agonies? Did you see his glazed eye, and the cold sweat upon his face; his anguished struggles, and convulsive throes? Did you hear him groan, and see him die? Now, this is literal, temporal death; and these mortal agonies the inspired writers have laid hold of, that, under the image of them, as enduring forever, they might adequately set forth the future punishment of the lost. This future punishment is *eternal death.* It is to be eternally dying, and never to die! It is to writhe and toss and groan and agonize forever in the struggle with death, and yet death never come to the rescue, never come to end the conflict! This, I repeat, is *eternal death;* from which conversion will save the sinner, and from which nothing else can. If he will turn from his evil ways, he need not, *shall not,* die: but, persisting in them, there is no help for him; there is, in this case, no deliverance

from that dreadful destruction which has been described.

5. But conversion does more than to save from death. I urge, fifthly, that it secures *life*, — immortal life and bliss to the soul. It introduces those who experience it into the family of God. It makes them heirs of all the promises, — “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” They are to be kept, while here on earth, by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. Their path is to be that of the just, which shines brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. When they go down into the dark valley, they shall not be deserted: they shall be sustained, supported, and carried triumphantly through; and, when they appear in other worlds, they shall go to dwell with Christ, with holy angels, and with all the redeemed, in the paradise of God above. In the morning of the resurrection, their bodies shall be raised glorious bodies, and be re-united to their happy, triumphing souls.

Amid all the terrors of the judgment, they shall stand undismayed. In the issues of it, they shall be acquitted and blessed, and be caught away from the judgment-bar to meet their Lord in the air, and so shall be ever with the Lord. They are to have their eternal dwelling amid the glories of the heavenly state. They are to advance in knowledge, holiness, and bliss ; their powers ever expanding, and ever delightfully occupied ; their measure ever enlarging and ever full, for ever and ever.

Such, in its consequences — its happy, glorious, interminable consequences — is conversion. And who will say, that, considered as an *event*, it is not one of the greatest magnitude, and of amazing interest. No wonder there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth : the event is enough to fill all heaven with joy. And who will say, that, considered as a *duty*, conversion is not one of the most urgent character, and of the greatest possible importance ? Other duties may be neglected, and our highest interests may

not be put at hazard; but no person can neglect or delay his conversion without putting at hazard every thing which ought to be dear to him,—his present peace, and his future joys; his comforts in this life, and his everlasting consolations beyond the grave.

CONCLUSION.

IN view of the statements which have been made, and the cases described, I would invite every reader to unite with me in the inquiry: *Are we converted persons?* We may have had distressing convictions of sin, and not be converted. We may have had dreams and visions and impulses and ecstasies, and not be converted. We may have made professions, and indulged hopes, and come often to the Lord's table, and not be converted. But do we love and delight in the holy character of God? Do we love to think of God, to pray to God, to serve and please God? Does it heartily grieve us that we have ever displeased him; and is it our desire and endeavor that we do so no more? Do we submit to the holy government of God, and rejoice in it, deeming it a great

privilege to live under his government, and to be in his hands ? Have we seen ourselves to be not only guilty, but undone ; and, under this impression, have we come to Christ, and embraced him as our portion and Saviour ? And, having embraced him, do we desire to be like him, and to follow him ? Do we desire to live no longer unto ourselves, but to him who died for us, and rose again ?

Now, these are decisive questions. If we can answer them to our consciences in the affirmative, we need not doubt : we should not doubt. We are unquestionably converted persons ; and we have only to press forward in the happy path on which we have entered, in order to come to the heavenly mansions.

But if we cannot answer the above questions in the affirmative, and have no such feelings as are indicated by them, then, whatever else we may have, we are not converted persons. We have no religion. We need not hope.

And to all my readers, whether young or

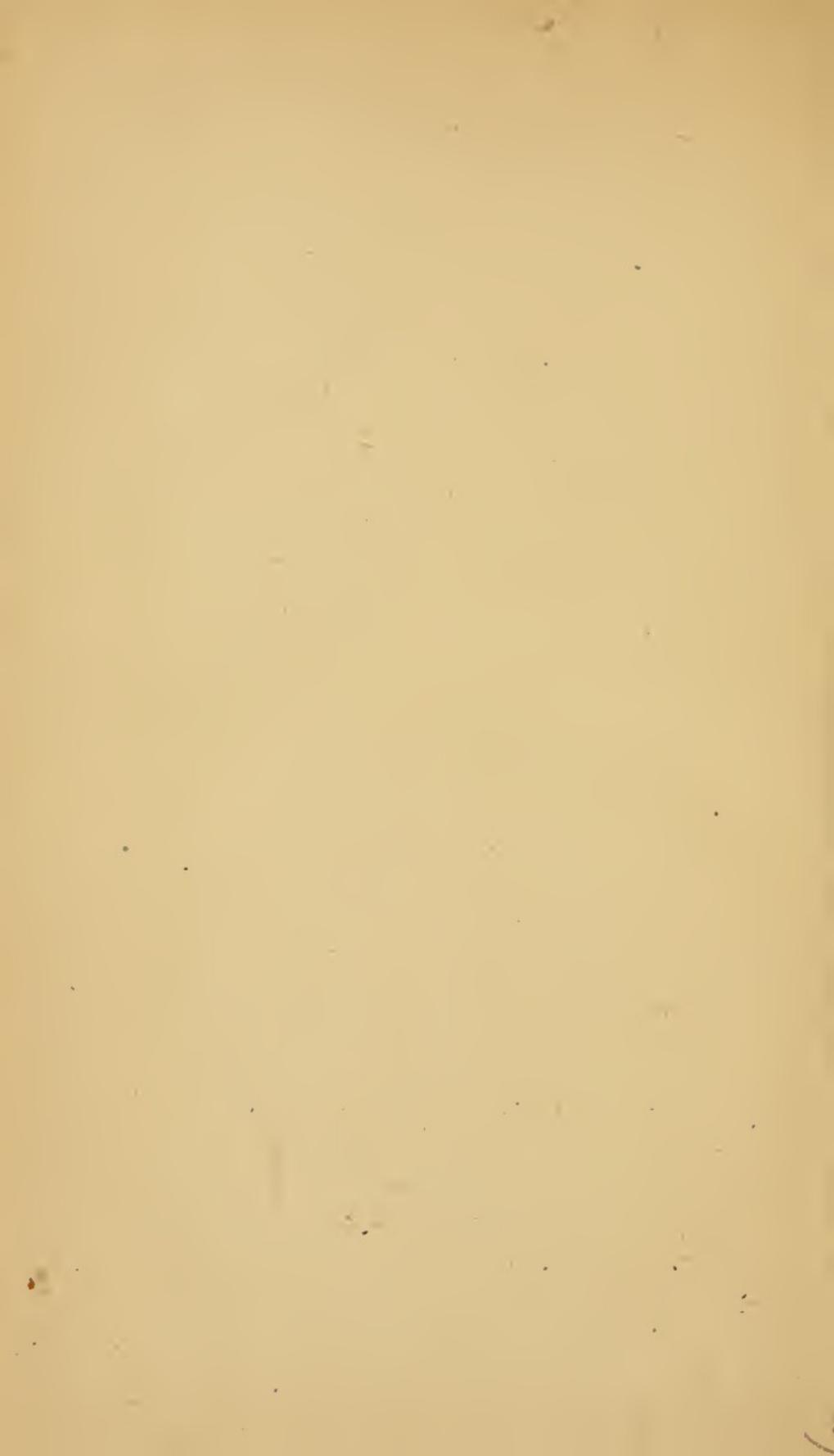
old, who find themselves in this miserable condition, I must ask, in conclusion, Will you not now listen to the pleading voice of your heavenly Father, and turn from your evil ways? You have heard what that conversion is which we urge upon you. You have heard of the reasonableness, the propriety of it, in every form which it assumes, in every view which can be taken of the subject. You have heard of the miseries which it alleviates, the sources of unhappiness which it dries up, the divine favor which it secures, and the joys and privileges which it confers, in the present world. You have heard of that dreadful death from which conversion, and this alone, can save you; and of that immortal, enduring, and most glorious life to which it conducts you. And now the question is pressed home upon you, in all its force, *What will you do?* Will you listen? Will you obey? Will you repent, and be converted? You may, if you will. You *must*, if you will. And, if you will not, then you cannot. What I mean to say is, this change can never be

accomplished in you but with the hearty concurrence and co-operation of your own wills.

Nor is this a subject on which you can long balance yourselves, so as not to decide it either way. The fact is, you *must* decide it one way or the other, and you will. If you do not repent of your sins, you will persist in them. If you do not come to Christ, you will reject him. If you do not turn, you will continue as you are.

Again, then, I would press the inquiry, with all the tenderness and earnestness of which I am capable, *What will you do?* Will you yield to the suggestions of Satan and of your own evil hearts, and venture on in sin, and risk the consequences? Or will you not rather listen to the monitions of conscience, the impulses of the Spirit, and the voice of God crying to you in his word, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live. Turn ye! turn ye from your evil ways! for *why will ye die?*"







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